Carmelite Monastery
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From Mrs. C. B. McGinnis
Christmas, 1920.

CARMELITE MONASTERY
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CARMELITE MONASTERY
SUNRISE ROAD, BRONX, N.Y.

"The Household of God" Series.

UPON GOD'S HOLY HILLS

I.

THE GUIDES

Nihil Obstat.

C. SCHUT, D.D.

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UPON GOD'S HOLY HILLS

I.
THE GUIDES

ST. ANTHONY OF EGYPT

ST. BRUNO OF COLOGNE

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

BY

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

AUTHOR OF

"IN GOD'S ARMY: I. COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF; II. CAPTAINS OF CHRIST; III. CHRIST'S CADETS"; "THE LIFE OF MGR. BENSON," ETC.

P. J. KENEDY & SONS

44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

1919

CB Saints
MaV

To D

DEODILECT. Why on earth should I have thought of putting your initial at the head of this book about hermits, monks, and friars? (And, I may tell you, I've even now failed to think of a proper name for it. Not but what I've had a dozen suggested to me, all beautifully alliterative, but all deplorably frivolous. . . . They wouldn't do.)

Possibly because in each of your letters from *là bas* such a tornado of desires and indignations came home to England—but among them always the desire which drove these mystics into their distant world; and, underneath the noise of your battery, you caught persistently the more terrific silence. You wanted London, and you knew what an illusion it so frankly offered; you dreamt of books—and read them! —and yet you saw behind the mask of literature: you considered the army, and dreaded its cogs and flywheels. So, will it be the

barracks ? or Fleet Street ? or—well, Jermyn Street ? or a cloister ? Not I can guess; not I, assuredly, suggest.

Provided always that the stammered syllables of hermits, and the grave chant of monks, and the ecstatic, broken lyrics of Mount Carmel, help to construct for you a song to sing at your innermost Communions, the book will have been worth writing, and you won't grudge the having read it. Anyhow, here it is, a present I'd have liked to give you long ago, at that rather hectic crammer's, or at the Shop, or in the tedious camps. But things don't happen, on the whole, until they ought.

Bien à toi,

C. C. M.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATION	v
ST. ANTHONY OF EGYPT AND THE HERMITS	3
ST. BRUNO OF COLOGNE AND THE CARTHUSIANS	47
ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS	89
POSTSCRIPT	153

UPON GOD'S HOLY HILLS

I.
THE GUIDES

ST. ANTHONY OF EGYPT
Circa 250–356

ST. BRUNO OF COLOGNE
Circa 1030–1101

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS
June 24, 1542–December 14, 1591

SAINT ANTHONY OF EGYPT

Circa 250–356

HERMITS, if they occur to the modern mind at all, do so, presumably, in the guise of mild old monks, living, no one quite knows how, in mossy caves, equipped with a knowledge of simples and the stars. A dog, an hour-glass, an enormous hat, lend sometimes a touch of quaint and blameless humour to the romantic scene. Such is the picture which Chateaubriand or Wordsworth paints. Far nearer to the truth are those still conventional prints of the seventeenth or of the eighteenth century, showing a fiercer generation, oak-men, gnarled and knotted, hard as the desert stones they live among, clothed only in skins or cactus-coats. And the fantastic note is there. You see them chained and loaded with huge weights; peeping from tombs; hanging in tubs; perched, like storks, on slender

pillars; above all, haunted by goblins of the most attractive sort.

I would like to ask what this strange race of men once stood for, appearing, scores of thousands strong, in the middle of our fourth Christian century, swarming by Nile and by Euphrates, populating the caverns of Palestine and Syria, and at last invading Europe. Why did they appear? Into what did they vanish or develop? Were they, so to speak, but a passing paroxysm of the human spirit? or are we to-day in any sense their heirs? And is the world different now, for worse or better, because they, long ago, were in it?

I.

And Moses said unto Joshua: . . . Fight with Amalek. To-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. . . . And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses's hands were heavy . . . and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek.—Exod. xvii. 9-13.

Christ said: Pray without ceasing. And the history of Christians shows that, whatever else they did, they have always prayed. An unpraying Church has never been seen or known. But there have always been men and women who have made explicit prayer a marked and special part of their life, and have deliberately tried to remove what hampered it. In the earliest days of Christianity such people did not separate themselves, however, from their homes. A bright air of happy holiness breathed through the first century—holiness

was at least understood, even when not practised. The early Church was in no sense all Saints, but no one was astonished at the triumphs of the Spirit. Worship was easy. But as Christianity spread, and absorbed the masses, the level of holiness naturally sank. There were mixed marriages; brothers might be pagan whose sisters were Catholics; there were Christians in high government or municipal positions, skilled in compromise and reticence, obliged to consider the feelings of others and their own careers; there were enough to say they must not be behind the fashion of the times; there were those proud to take the lead in worldliness; Christians fought, at times, for their own great offices, and the pagan Prætextatus used jestingly to say he would at once become a Christian if St. Jerome would promise him he should be made Pope.*

When, upon this gathering impetus to worldliness, a persecution like that of Decius, about 250, scattered the Egyptian Christians

* Rather like Cecil Rhodes, who declared, they say, he would certainly be a Jesuit if he could be promised the Generalship.

into the deserts, there were not a few who found this enforced emancipation from society grow so sweet that they prolonged their exile, or at least loved to live outside great towns, not in them; apart, too, from their families, when these once more were swept away in the bad old current. These men and women formed, however, no organized groups, and their exodus cannot be called a movement, nor a general force, acting on their period or the future.

This was when St. Anthony was born. He was an Egyptian, and at eighteen or twenty inherited his parents' not inconsiderable wealth. As for St. Francis in a later age, Christ's words, "Go, sell all that thou possessest," struck home to him. He made over his three hundred acres of lucrative Egyptian soil to the poor of his own village; and again, thrilled by the injunction to take no heed for the morrow, gave away his moneys and retired to the outlying territory, where he might meet with like-minded men and study eternal things. So it was neither flight from cruel tyrants nor seductive world, precisely, which first drove him to the wilderness, but sentences

from those Scriptures with which all these men were saturated. The impressionable boy, knowing his temperament to be all of moods, attached himself as disciple to an experienced old man, and thus weathered the reactions of melancholy and discouragement, and the feverish ambitions, and the rebellions, proper to his age.

For fifteen years he lived a life of study and austerity among the great Egyptian tombs, achieving, too, that intimate knowledge of the human soul given to those only whose own soul has revealed its infinite capacities of good and ill, and has in all alike been *governed.* At last he felt even this discipline insufficient. He found a dismantled fort on the banks of the Nile, destined to become the monastery of Pispir—to-day Der el Memun; and though the ruins were horrible with serpents, he remained unharmed, blocking his door, and receiving every six months a load of bread, which, with a few dates, was his food during some twenty years, a fact well vouched for and not hard to parallel. At the end of this time his friends, who periodically visited him, still found him hale and hearty.

He had, however, become a magnet for the solitaries, who trooped from near and far to consult him, and formed, at last, a colony around him. He finally left his seclusion and organized, to some extent, these crowds; and even, when persecution broke out afresh, went with several friends to help the Alexandrian Christians, visiting their prisons and the Sudan mines where they were kept at labour, defying the pagan authority with much *aplomb ;* yet, such was the chaotic administration of that distracted province, he was never himself arrested. Perhaps his reputation already made it not worth the risk. After five or six years of relatively external and active life, he ascended the Nile in search of greater solitude, and crossed the desert to a mountain ridge confronting the Red Sea. Here his monastery, Der Mar Antonios, is still surviving.

He established himself upon this mountain, and softened, it would seem, his austerity somewhat, since he cultivated enough ground near his cell to supply him with his minimum of food. Moreover, his external activity was considerable and regular. Not only the monks pilgrimaged to him, carrying water for the way

on camels, but he descended periodically to visit and preserve in due order the monks of the lower desert, who had assembled there in thousands. But the links which bound them to one another were of the loosest. There were no specific vows, and individual tendencies had the freest scope. It is true that in the inner Nitrian desert, called the Cells, where this type of monachism is seen in its perfection, the type of life was purely eremitical. Outside they lived by twos, threes, or even more. On Sundays they met for common worship in an enormous church. In the enclosure round this church were three palm-trees, and on each hung a whip. The first was to chastise monks 'who sinned through wantonness'; the second for brigands who might fall upon the place; the third for strangers who flocked there and transgressed in any way whatsoever.... The strangers, however, continued to flock, and had a hostelry of their own, where they could stay as long as they liked, only, on week-days, they had to work in bakery, or refectory, or at weaving flax. In the evening they had to go to the prayers and psalms, which went up so loud

"that a man might imagine, his soul being exalted, that he was in the Paradise of Eden." Anthony's influence radiated far, however, beyond the monastery of Pispir, and even beyond Egypt. At Tabennisi, near Denderah, St. Pachomius inaugurated in 318 a new style of monachism, highly centralized, with Superior-General, visitations, chapters, and the like, and with organized work as an integral part of its system: gardening, carpentry, iron-work, basket-making, dyeing, tanning, cobbling, calligraphy, and the like, had each its special department and staff. He set a moderately high level of life, obligatory upon all, but which each might surpass if he so felt able. Thus, dinner was served at midday for those who could fast no more, and thenceforward, hour by hour, for those who could hold out longer!

This fully cœnobitic life has less in common with St. Anthony's semi-eremitic system than, say, the Carthusian has, though it flowed from it, and became much more normal and was perfected in the Middle Ages. Meanwhile St. Hilarion, who had visited Anthony about 310, inaugurated monachism in Palestine; and

Mar Agwin, in 325, in Mesopotamia and Syria. This was where, owing to local tradition and instinct, the more fantastic forms of asceticism developed, such as violent bodily penances, rarely read of in Antonian literature; chained Saints, tub-Saints, pillar-Saints; Saints who never sat down, or never turned to this point or that of the compass.

St. Simeon of the Pillar, a northern Syrian, is no myth. He first established himself on a sort of masonry platform, some six or nine feet high, and ascended successively higher pillars, till he finally spent thirty years, exposed to all weathers, on a building fifty or sixty feet high, to which access was had only by ladders. The top was fenced round, and two of his disciples found room there when he was dying. It is doubtful whether he was visible outside the walls of his enclosure. He found, perhaps, inspiration from the use to which the Asiatic pillar-tombs were put, squat buildings ten or twenty feet in height, with the tomb at the top, say six feet by four. The Harpy Tomb in the British Museum is such a tomb, and has probably been inhabited by a Christian hermit. However, Syria had seen

pillar-ascetics even in pagan times, and Lucian describes, in his treatise on the "Syrian Goddess," those tall columns on which her priests would stand, sleepless, for seven days, surrounded by devotees. They sent up to them by another priest, who climbed them "as men climb palm-trees," offerings and requests for oracles. It remains that St. Simeon's reputation and influence were enormous. He, like St. Anthony, lived in touch with Emperors, and was consulted by politicians, judges, and generals, and actively combated the philosophical heresies of his day. Both were men of shrewd judgment, and, from the tops of pillars and mountains, gained a fairly comprehensive view. . . .

St. Anthony died after forty-five years upon his Red Sea ridge, aged one hundred and five, his sight and hearing unimpaired, and all his teeth sound in his head. St. Athanasius, who loved him, and perhaps felt himself something of a Joshua beside this Moses, wrote his life, an event of very far-reaching consequences.

For the moment, I would say that Anthony is a perfectly "alive" and strongly featured

personality. It used to be the fashion to declare that no one really wrote the books everyone supposed they had, and a learned fad even to deny that persons of supreme importance had really lived. Scholars have pleasantly surmised not only that Athanasius never wrote the "Life of Anthony," but that whoever did invented him *tout d'une pièce ;* and that the " Great Man " was, as completely as King Arthur, Buddha, or Abraham, not to mention other more sacred names, a mere hero of romance. A witty Bishop proved, quite as conclusively, that Napoleon was a solar myth; and Dom E. C. Butler, O.S.B., has done more than any one man else to restore credit to the whole Antonian literature, and no one should do more, now, than draw amusement from these critics. We feel in touch with Anthony; we visualize him more easily than his contemporary Emperors, or than many a medieval King or all but modern statesman.

Had I to circumscribe, in a word, that characteristic of Anthony which seems the most impressive, I should say *dignity*. Dignity is theirs who are strong and gentle. It fails in the sturdy hustler; in the bully, the mus-

cular lazy lout, or professional strong man; in those tornado folk who carry all before them, and do a day's business so as to leave a six weeks' task of clearing up to their subordinates. It fails, too, in the merely sympathetic, the cozener or cajoler, the " delightful creatures " who expect to get their way because you are to succumb to them. It fails, again, in the prim; the pattern of propriety; the correct person whose position in the world is certainly assured, because he has behind and around him the enormous mass of the expected, of comfortable custom, who does not shock nor challenge. Pomposity may be there, a smug sufficiency, but not dignity. You may have found a personage, but in none of these cases true personality. It was by force of personaality, you feel, that Anthony was conqueror, which caused him instantly to be singled out, unknown before, among the flocking monks; which enthralled thousands, not into admiration only, nor homage, but positive, chosen, difficult thought and action; which caused his portrait to be everywhere in Rome, he yet alive; and *altered lives* throughout an Empire of different races and instincts, and through-

out centuries still unfinished. And this man fled publicity, and yet sought no mystic halo; lurked within no cocoon of myth; denied himself *complete* invisibility, like the unseen Persian King's, almighty in his solitude. Anthony, when he did appear, mixed with his monks in absolute simplicity. He gave himself no "airs." A dignity which requires a prop is no dignity at all. A teacher who fears to recognize he was mistaken; a professor who pretends rather than acknowledge ignorance; a demonstrator who "fakes" experiments sooner than risk an unsuccess: these are the weaklings—unsure men, undignified in the process of their fraud, and heading for the supreme humiliation of being found out. For men's eyes are sharp, and those not least of the uninstructed, the simple folk. the "layman." Someone is bound to cry out that the Emperor has no clothes on; and the world laughs, and the great pretence collapses. Anthony, then, was strong, and had the simplicity of his strength. He has nothing to fear from his generation or our own.

With this, as I said, went gentleness—not softness. Giants are often soft, and many a

stalwart lad has nothing of a constitution. True gentleness has to go with complete manliness, and you may play, if you like, with the word "gentleman." The monks, in their chronicles, are habitually called athletes, and their doings described in terms taken from the wrestling-ring. Yet, just as Anthony's gravity was not morose, nor his austerity gloom, so his robust training was never brutal, nonchalant, or clumsy. There is, indeed, a tolerance—better, a tenderness—in the anecdotes which cluster round him; a delicate understanding of human nature, which prove that his heart was great, not only to endure, but to embrace; his virility not rigidity; his other-worldly ardour not incompatible with an adaptable method well in place in any man of affairs; a graciousness, intolerable in the second-rate or snob, but to be looked for in a right splendid "gentleman," as we still can say, who has no need, as no taste, to condescend, but respects those from whom he rightly claims respect; and a loyal affection—in fact, a warmth of love—justly to be sought in one who names himself Christ's follower. There is a lovable story, restored to notice by Dom

Cuthbert Butler, in which all these characteristics are hinted at, together with a crisp touch of humour, which, quite unexpectedly, perhaps, goes crackling through that better than the "Arabian Nights," the "Lausiac History," by Palladius.

Eulogios, struck by a passion for immortality, deserted the world's hubbub. But he grew lonely, and seeing a man crippled of hand and foot, though glib enough of tongue, made pact with God that he would take and tend the beggar till he died, and through him be saved. The cripple throve for fifteen years, and then fell sick. Eulogios bathed, fed, and cured him. With convalescence came temper. The cripple railed at his benefactor, adding to a string of insults, and for climax, "You want to get yourself saved by means of me! Put me in the market-place. I want meat."

Eulogios gave him meat. "No; put me in the market-place. I want the crowds. Oh, put me where you found me."

Eulogios grew serious. "Am I to cast him forth? But God and I have given our right hands. Or keep him? But to me he gives bad days and nights."

He consults his friends. "Both of you go to Anthony."

Now, Anthony, when men called on him, had had them announced as from Egypt or Jerusalem, according as their quest was frivolous or sincere, and treated the former courteously but briefly, and the latter with long care. "Which," said he, as the pair approached, "are these?" "A mixture," said Macarius, his secretary. Eulogios entered first. To him, Anthony said, in grave and austere voice: "Thou wouldst cast him forth? But He who made him casts him not forth at all. Thou wouldst cast him forth? But God hath raised up the Fairer One than thou to gather him." Then to the other: "O crooked soul and crippled! cease thy fight with God! Knewest thou not it was *Christ* who served thee? To Christ thou speakest thus? For Christ's sake Eulogios has made himself thy slave." He bade them affectionate farewell, and the two went home friends, and died within three days of one another.

Altogether, St. Anthony recalls the colossal figures of the Patriarchs: the grave beauty of an Abraham, father of God's folk; Moses, holding up hands of prayer above the battling Israel; eagle-eyed prophets, and psalmists strong to praise, proclaim, and worship. And all alike are utterly in tone with that grand

East of theirs: fierce at its hours, grim with sand and rock in the ruthless noon-time, yet flaming or melting into unimagined loveliness of colour in the quick rising and setting of the day. There are moments of the dawn when no daffodil nor primrose is more splendid or more delicate than are those mountains, and their shadowed chasms are as subtle as the violet, and the sky more pure than any speedwell's blue. And again no carnation and no cornflower can glow more gorgeous than those same ridges and that sky, and, at another moment, the whole world grows translucent, like the ruby, the amethyst, or "Oriental sapphire," or John's apocalyptic gold. So rich a grandeur is to be observed, by no mere fanciful enthusiasm, in these great men of South and East; so superb a figure, so firm, yet so various and so lovable, shows St. Anthony upon his Red Sea mountain.

NOTE.—Are we to look to this affinity with the Old Testament for a partial explanation of the love these early monks displayed for the concrete, the materialistic example, and the acted parable? Jeremiah, Isaiah, even Ezekiel, recur at once to mind. Monks come

to ask St. Anthony whether they must welcome pilgrims or rebuff them. Anthony retires, reappears in rags, sits down, and says no word. He again retires, comes back in feast-day gear, and sits silent. A third time he withdraws, and returns in his wonted dress. "Look! am I different because my clothes are? Even so, come one, come all, come none, be equable within yourselves; kind to all; at peace in a crowd, at peace alone." By their real selves they must live. Thoughts, temptations, instantly visualize themselves. He journeys through a desert; he thinks of wealth. Forthwith a silver bowl appears by the roadside. He recognizes a temptation, and the bowl vanishes. In fine, he *sees* to right and left the demons who are tempting him, herein passing beyond the Gospel's hint, which says, "Satan hath bound her," "We are Legion," but does not *show* the spirits. Allowing for the sheer element of romance, these stories from the desert are full of sound psychology and moral value. Nathaniel swears never to leave his cell. The Devil jeers at him, and off Nathaniel goes. After this the Devil, "dressed like a Roman huntsman," slings stones round the runaway's new cell. Nathaniel, annoyed, extracts the confession that this is he who cajoled him out of

his old cell, and will get him out of this one too. Rather cleverly, he does indeed leave the new cell, only, however, to return to the old. The Devil changes tactics and will make vice of virtue. Certain Bishops visited Nathaniel—"now they were all holy men"—and on their departure the monk, grown obstinate, refused to escort them even for one step. "Dost thou possess the faculty of pride," grumbled their servants, "that thou wilt not accompany the Bishops?" "I died once for all to my lords the Bishops* and to all the world. I have a secret." And he remained indoors. The Devil, not satisfied, took the shape of a young man, and knocked. "My ass has fallen. Come out to help me, lest the hyenas slay us." "Now, there were many hyenas in the place." Nathaniel could not be sure if this were God's voice, or a sign that *his will had reached its limit.* He prayed and cried: "If thou needest help, God will send it; if thou art a temptation, be thy fraud discovered." Herein charity mated with determination. The Devil was shamed, and took the shape of a whirlwind and the form of wild asses which dance about and skip. "This

* Here but a corner of the veil is lifted—torn, now and again, from head to foot—which conceals the rivalry of monks and the ordinary authorities.

is the triumph of blessed Nathaniel, and this his labour and his ending !"

Sometimes the very romances are delightful, as when the holy man Makarios went to find the magic garden of the desert, and fixed, at every mile, a reed in the ground, sign-posts for return. And the Devil pulled them all up; and when Makarios was one mile from his destination he found them, on awaking, all in a bundle under his head. This was to teach him to trust the God of the Pillars of Fire and Smoke. Incidentally, when he did reach the garden, through a cloud of devils who came out in the shape of ravens, there was nothing there but a dried well with rusted bucket, and a few pomegranates shrivelled by the sun.

II.

Toujours il part d'un pied sûr, mais bientôt il trébuche en des bizarreries fastidieuses, quand soudain le voilà qui se relève et repart d'un bond magnifique vers de fulgurantes intuitions du monde invisible; son génie est là dans ces bondissements, ces transports, ces regards d'aigle enivré.—R. Vallery Radot; *Le Réveil de l'Esprit.*

The author I have quoted, a man of remarkable intuition and much freedom from mere formula, writes of Ruysbröck what well may be said of the early monastic life in the mass. Unfortunately, one's vulgar sense is always flicked, earliest, by the startling and exaggerated; and it is difficult not to see first of all, in this curious page of history, precisely what is least substantial in it—namely, the pillars, the tubs, the tricks of demons: the abnormalities, in short. Even when we try hard to replace the torn-out page in its proper position at the head of the fourth or fifth chapter of a volume well in the middle of a series, it is not, alas! the immediate context

which first comes to our help, that we may understand it. We think with difficulty through the brains of those third-century Egyptians, Catholic, heretic, or pagan; we have deliberately to recall the pre-Christian asceticism of that country, the priesthoods of the Nile-land, the mystics of Alexandria and neo-Platonism. We have to look up books to make sure of what the fanatics of Asia were about, and to revive our memories of the pillar-priests of Syria.

The easier thing is, I suppose, to allow the grotesque figures of Indian fakirs to engage one's memory, though even these owe most of their familiarity to England's chance association with the Indian East; and next, I cannot but recall, in the Greek world, the school of Cynic philosophers, with whom, as a matter of fact, contemporaries themselves were anxious that the Christian ascetics should not be identified.*

* See St. Gregory Nazianzen's thirty-fifth sermon, which welcomes Bishop Maximus, the Christian Cynic, to Constantinople. In c. 5 his conduct is contrasted with those who retired completely from the world, to the disadvantage of the latter. There is more interesting evidence about him in Gregory's poems *De Vita Sua*

In the Far East, then, China and India, a respectable monastic system existed and exists, worthy of much sympathetic attention: but, despite the dreams of, say, Theosophists, and despite a certain tendency among the late Greeks to travel. and to idealize the life of the Brahmins, it did not influence in any substantial way our Western monasticism. nor does it readily appeal to the Western mind. The degenerate vagabond race of fakirs (for this Mohammedan word has come to be popularly applied to Hindu devotees almost exclusively) has struck our imagination, strange and hateful aberrations of the ascetic instinct, men who would burn and wound themselves without feeling pain, or stand with arms upraised till muscles grew inflexible, or with hands clenched till nails pierced through the palms and projected through the flesh. Hindu religion has always leant to madness; cruelty, panic, and obscenity run riot in the brains it has corrupted; but not these, again,

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and No. 41 of the *Poemata de Seipso*. St. Jerome *De Viris Illustribus*, cc. 117, 127, gives a short account of him. He was deposed by the Council of Constantinople. Soz., vii. 9.

came into contact with the Christian monks; and comparisons drawn between them could only be based upon the supposition of a similar perverted instinct, common to humanity, in each of the two groups. Of all Greek figures I daresay the still most popular is Diogenes, who lived in a tub, and cheeked the almighty Alexander, and went about with a lantern in broad daylight, "looking for a Real Man." He came second, however, in that school of "Cynics" which persevered for centuries, and got its repute chiefly for its total contempt of all conventions, extending from public insolence to Emperors to sermons in the slums; and from an extreme asceticism of the will at the expense—in theory at least, and often in practice—of the senses, to the most slack and filthy habits of dress and behaviour. They penetrated everywhere; they shouted their insults in the circus; they railed against adoring ladies in the most fashionable drawing-rooms; they tutored the rich, and consorted with the poor, who often loved them. They were famous for denying *en bloc* all popular beliefs, empire, wealth, love, law, science, and, in short, the validity of civilization itself.

Austere philosophers were among them, who have left their mark on the history of asceticism; and a multitude of disgusting charlatans, whose tricks enliven the pages of ancient literature, and are cursed by a Juvenal and gaily sneered at by a Lucian.

This singular race of men was fathered by Antisthenes, a disciple—as who was not ? for an antagonist is his disciple without whom he never would exist—of Socrates. He seized on the Socratic *will to think*, and applied ruthless reason to every existing human institution. This deeply embittered man deliberately attacked civilization as a corruption, and, going far behind the " mild and noble " savage of a Rousseau, beheld in animals the authoritative model for our race, and even wrote a book on them. Not Swift himself dared this. With the development of family, still more of city-life, all fraud, he held, all injustice and hatred, entered the world. Zeus was right in punishing Prometheus, who gave to men that fire which was the seed of arts and crafts. Well-being has bred effeminacy; unprotected man is the strongest; frogs are as delicate of structure as are humans, and need no coats nor any

armour. . . . Nature is reasonable: leave her to work; man's choice is arbitrary; his inventions are disastrous. We believe them to be good, and move in a world of illusion. Empire means misery: the beggar's life alone is free. Only the pauper is "world-citizen." But a beggar's life is surely wretched? "Yes, he answers, "if you believe in pleasure." "Better madness than pleasure! If I met Aphrodite, I would kill her!" By the violence of his symbolic life, his fierce parables in action, Diogenes drove home these beliefs. He shrank from no paradox.

"Cannibalism?" "Well, why not eat human flesh? it feeds." "Incest?" "Well, what does marriage exist for?"

Yet through the history of these hypocrites or madmen, as you may please, runs a "live wire" of ideal: ministry to the sorrow of the world. Mankind is one; mankind suffers, and it accepts and doubles its own suffering by believing in the illusions which alone enforce it. What vitiated this was their total aloofness from all concrete history: for a faith, the palest Deism, surviving from their ruin of popular religious systems; and an appall-

ing spiritual pride (inevitable when a man differentiates himself from his fellow-men without an active belief in a transcendent God before whom all men are equal in created littleness, though called to an essential equality in dignity as His sons);* and the adoption of a system of exterior life which lent itself more easily to the cultivation of a spirit of show and ostentation than of what it professed to symbolize. Almost anyone can, if it flatters him enough, qualify as an ascetic acrobat.

It will be seen, first, from this contrast, what the monks were *not*. They were not, on the one hand, men who so believed in the illusions of the senses that, like those whom the fakirs travesty, they seek, by negation of all will, to escape from the cycle of finite existence and so to remerge and lose their personality in the undifferentiated Absolute. They believed in God and their eternal selves, and their life was a long *effort* to make themselves what He would have them eternally to be. Nor yet were they Cynics, whose will-triumph was

* The Cynic trampled on Plato's carpets. "I trample on the pride of Plato." "Yes," answered that great gentleman, "but with another pride of your own."

based wholly on the self-sufficiency intrinsically possible to individual man. Their strength, they held, flowed primarily from God, through Christ their Lord. He made their will strong, for and through Himself. India ruined the notion of humanity, body and soul. Greece exalted it, to replace the Godhead. The monks believed in man's created littleness and possible high dignity, and wrestled, God helping them, to transcend the one and win the other.

The two contrasts just made were worth making, especially the second; but they look backwards, and it has just occurred to me that Charles Kingsley drew a picture of the second generation of monks which still, I suppose, may cloud the imagination of some. He shows them as fanatical to murder-point, and no doubt, by picking out this case or that, multiplying it, and making it representative, he can create an argument. It remains that his general picture is false; and that he shows himself, here as in "Westward Ho!"—to use Monsignor Benson's words—incapable of seeing the truths for which he had not a temperamental sympathy.

Now let us directly consider the quality of the first great movement of Christian monasticism. Let us own at once that it contained a sufficiency of downright fanatics, perhaps dishonest. These gad-abouts, trading on sensation-lovers among the ignorant crowd, or the jaded aristocracy, brawling in the market-place, bursting into palaces, filthy of dress, fantastic in penances, excited the rage, not alone of the cultured enemies of all enthusiasm, but of ardently ascetic spirits like St. Jerome, who both by example and writing testified to his supreme admiration for the pure monastic ideal. These men, out for money, and careless of popular contempt, or even of the physical discomforts they might choose merely through coarseness of soul-fibre, may be disregarded. They were made possible by the monks, but were never truly of them. These few are the fakirs of Christianity.

Again, there are the stupid. Men often see only the externals of a life, and fail utterly to grasp its inner spirit. To a greater or less degree, monks of this limited mentality mimicked the practices of those great men

round whom they grouped themselves, and tried to excel what they saw done, and even to invent—forgive me if I use the word now necessary to our language—their special stunt.* It was in the control and educating of these limited minds and headstrong impulses that the monastic ideal of obedience became so healthfully operative.

More dangerous by far was the infection of genuine fanaticism. Blood intoxicates always, whether it be another's or one's own. The Eastern degenerates I have alluded to certainly went mad of their self-inflicted wounds. Apart from blood, pain, too, can come to fascinate. The frantic insomnia of the Syrian priests, hot-eyed and with bursting temples as they stood upon their pillars, could feed upon itself, and become almost a habit, and sleep an agony. In this very horrible department of human perversion some of the baser crowd of Christian ascetics, even, will surely find their place. But whatever the nature of the method

* The monks of one monastery mobbed their Abbot, who had admitted, as guest, one who could fast longer than they could.

they adopted, or the greater or less intelligence with which they lived it out, these men had for very simple premises belief in God, in immortality, and in sin. They fled from a wicked world lest they should "lose their soul," and in order—though this was a secondary motive—to convert the world they had left. They worked at the very grammar of the spiritual life, and, without guessing it, often achieved a most subtle knowledge of its minutiæ. They began like men anxious to grasp, and then to instil, the necessary rudiments of a dead language. In some cases they became like schoolmasters, passionate over rules, and maddened by the sight of "howlers" in their pupils' work. At times the whole spirit of learning seems to evaporate beneath the touch of these honest, limited pedagogues; they succeed in writing, and obtaining, correct exercises, and no more. They have nothing of the sense which thrives best, say, in some ancient home of culture, like Oxford, and which fastens on imagination, or spirit, or originality, or instinct for that thought which is behind and fashions language, and compensates for mere mistakes. Anyone can make

mistakes! Probably Cicero and Demosthenes did themselves; certainly Vergil did; certainly Catullus. But the life was in them. In much that these old monks said and did is to be found an almost terribly strong faith in a few vast things, and an all-day-and-all-night grind at applying their principles to the stuff their souls provided. If in the doing it their "eyes grew dross of lead," they cared little enough for that. If they were "dead from the waist down," and paralyzed for half the occupations of human life—well, they never would have pretended that their life was a "full" human life, but rather a "rehearsal of death" better than was Plato's, for, after all, life was short and eternity was long. Do what you will, in an unsophisticated brain, the thoughts of sin, salvation, the soul, eternity, once they take fire, burn up most other thoughts, and these overwhelming considerations draw to themselves all the vitality which else were deflected into a hundred channels. Fanaticism! A word easy to repeat and a word difficult to understand. *Supposing these things are true*, eternal loss or gain, is it not indeed enough to drive a man, to the world's estimation, mad

when he sees the possible best in men corrupted —and corruption comes, not alone through misuse, but disuse—the most promising boys duped, drugged, and made nothing of; the most delightful girls vulgarized and left selfish and bored; ideals unborn, action unfed by any stuff for enterprise, life annulled; the empty occupations of the provinces and the petty round of middle-class society; the gay glamour of town, and the enormous fraud of all that makes that "good time," than which so many ask no more; the culture of Universities, refined, unenthusiastic, radically sceptical; the shibboleths of science; the insolent offence of journalism; the tyranny of a "season,"or of business; and the obliterating mass of drudgery which makes pulp of the workers' existence, until the explosion comes which creates only a worse chaos? To many it seems quite hopeless ever to come to anything in such environments. The only possible chance is to get out of them. Convert them, remaining in and with them? "In the world, not of it?" And texts are easily enough quoted. But in practice that seems as naïve as the young girl's dream who fancies herself "called" to

convert the charming rake. . . . And naïver; for of his vice she knows nothing save by hearsay, edited at that, and lurid only by the help of romantic imagination, untaught to supply details. But they have been fully *in* the spell of lamp-lit laughter, which transfigures the crude reality of lust, and have felt conscience strangled out by wealth, and watched ideals break their fine wings against the enormous inertia of custom. So they hate it; so they leave it; so they practise its direct opposite, furiously, exaggeratedly, clamorously. They do not profess to be leading, exactly, Christ's own life. They are the Baptists who prepare His way, and even to be that is an honour and a crown.

Nor can we pretend they went unrewarded, even by the world they flouted.

The immediately valuable element in this strange movement which I would disengage —valuable, I mean, for the individual monk, and, it has been proved, for European civilization generally—is that it put order into mysticism. By mysticism I mean that human tending to seek the super-human, to identify (in some sense) the soul with the super-soul—

that is, in the long run, God; and, by counter-effect, to disesteem the transient, limited, and visible, and in particular the body. The extreme of both tendencies is to be seen, as I said, in India. Nowhere else have been registered, in combination, so passionate a belief in the Ultimate One, in Brahma, in that Unnameable All in which all forms are to merge, and so furious a rage with the limitations of flesh and sense. Of course, there, too, the perfect philosophers will disdain ascetic aberrations, and the base fakir is incapable of the lofty vision; but nowhere else is the intervening territory so wide or so densely populated with men in whose brains the Idea undoubtedly exists, grown conscious, fixed, and imperative, and in whose bodies the delicious agony of self-immolation has become so absorbing. In Syrian asceticism, nearer home, the idea was far less cogent; the physical frenzy existed and was hideous enough; but, while it was more noticeable than the philosophy, it issued forth on a less wide scale and provided little enough art, if any. Art in some countries reveals (as among the Aztecs) such suggestions of insanity (which can quite well go with

extreme cleverness of execution, and, indeed, with remarkable indications of scientific method and conception) that we are all but justified in arguing, from its evidence alone, to a similar loss of moral equilibrium. In Athens the sense for physical beauty, of the supreme value of *limit*, made any such loss of equilibrium disgusting even to the less sensitive and educated; in a Plato, although in some ways his philosophy was simply, as they say, asking for it, it made it unthinkable, though his Symposium is perilous. Dare I say that in the Greeks was innate a quality really not unlike our English "respectability," our sense of "limit in behaviour," of "good form" rather than of "form" generally, or of the right working value of ideas; for, as a race, we do not take kindly to ideas? . . . Yet one is always hearing "ascetics" or "mystics" condemned as "exaggerated"; and even a distinguished professor has condemned the Fathers of the Desert for practices which he described, as climax of disparagement, as "not respectable." . . . Some of the Greeks—the Cynics, that is—certainly found their way out of that, and were disliked accordingly. The

Egyptian neo-Platonists and their allies combined disparate cultures, the Greek, and their own immemorial tradition; and in no books belonging to the immediate background, or seed-plot, of our own world will you find such amazing upsoaring of the spirit and such sensual pruriency juxtaposed.

In our present-day England, and also in America, though the national characteristic holds good, there seems to be quite a remarkable recrudescence of ideas, or desire, at any rate, to cope with what lies behind and beyond the usual schemes of practical life. Hence the torrent of mystical literature in which speculation seethes and bubbles, each new formula exploding in quick succession. The fire is there, and the liquid mind-stuff is there; it remains a question of what gets precipitated, what made a scum of—what, in fine, emerges from all this turmoil. We certainly can't cope with our ideas; we haven't a notion from what to start; how to regulate, whither to guide our effervescent mysticism. The results are as insipid and far less salutary than morning salts. Quite different was the birth of philosophy, for instance, in Ionia. Totally

different the unparalleled intellectual ferment of the thirteenth century. Best comparable is the Gnostic period, when into the melting-pot were chucked the products of Greece, Palestine, Persia, Syria, India, Egypt, and Rome.

One of the very first things for which the movement inaugurated by Anthony and developed by Pachomius—and by St. Basil in the East—was responsible, was the imposing of order upon the mystical will, which issues at once into asceticism. (For we may be allowed to regard this particular movement as concerned rather with the will than with intellect, and that is why it reminds us so directly of the Cynics.) The great leaders had to cope, not alone with the extremists in enthusiasm, but with the opposite, yet not more elementary problem of petty passions. We read of a nunnery where the nuns would slap their particular *bête noire*, empty water over her, and put mustard in her nostrils. A chaplain had to sit all the day at his window to see what they were up to. . . . All alike, these great ones had to "grind at grammar." Heavens! how one wishes, when one reads

these books about souls "in Tune with the Infinite," Secret Gardens, Curtained Shrines, and what not, that our generation could be set to grind at grammar! Which of us dares to say he is master even of simplest sentence-building? Hence the enormous value of that substratum of sound sense and that insistence on the supreme importance of obedience which is to be found in all "monastic" writings. The will was to be developed, but by control. It is these men with whom a St. Ignatius is in truest continuity. It has been well said that Cassian, whose "*Conferences*" were written some seventy years after the "*Life of Anthony*" appeared, composed therein a sort of *Summa* of the ascetic life, and it is this which is taken up and developed—within the limits of his conventions—by a Jesuit, Alfonso Rodriguez, novice-master in Majorca. It is exasperating when modern critics enlarge upon the reckless enthusiasms or lop-sided fanaticism of these men, or produce their weak reproofs, such as: "The monks created their temptations"; "Introspection breeds hypersensitiveness"; "Loneliness spoils perspective." Do they really suppose

these masters of human psychology did not know all that? Never has it been so clearly stated. Let them but read Pachomius's advice to Palladius on purity. What adjective would they consider least applicable of all to Anthony? Probably our slang word *clubbable: sociable*, shall we translate it? Yet that is precisely how Anthony was described: pleasant, never worried by "dust of thought," untroubled by turbulent or peevish or melancholy mood: πολιτικός—a true man of the world. Did the monks underestimate human nature? Why, so far did these ascetics of the East (and I include the great Cappadocian Fathers, like Basil and the Gregorys, and a John Chrysostom) proceed in their praise of human possibility that they seemed, to some, to lean too far in that direction, and the word semi-Pelagianism has been pronounced, if only to deny that they rightly incurred the reproach of insufficiently distinguishing natural perfectibility from the unshared work of grace. Yes; for shrewd human knowledge and for simple downright *humour* the first ascetics deserve high place in our affection and esteem.

I have tried to indicate, without even beginning to elaborate it, an organic and active element, of perhaps primary importance for Christian history, in the early monastic movement. Observe the line along which it inevitably operated. Anthony's "Life" was written by Athanasius, and caused a crisis in the process of St. Augustine's own conversion. Thus the whole current of Augustinianism, so different in many ways from Antonianism, yet so potent and so formative in European history, was, if not set going, yet accelerated by, and in a real measure due to, Anthony. This is far more important than, say, the fact that Constantine the Great and his sons corresponded with the famous solitary, and were, to some degree, influenced by his counsel. Other elements in Western monachism are directly due to its Eastern prototype. Not to dwell on the earlier systems of South Italy, the work of St. Martin in Gaul and the movement in Ireland itself were in direct imitation of the Egyptian monks. More important still, St. Benedict used, while he modified, the examples set by the Fathers of the Desert. He was a *maker*, as much as any

great man can be; but none can work, like the Creator, out of nothing: he would never have done what he did without his materials, and these all came from Anthony and his successors. Now, when the Roman Empire went down in ruins, three permanent centres of cohesion remained, three channels through which the old civilization, its law, culture, and idealism flowed: the Pope, the Bishops, and the monasteries. Without these, what would have been formed out of the chaotic elements of barbarism, and when ? Not, anyhow, the Europe of to-day. Not Paris, not Oxford. Not Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare; not anything, you may say, save our Northern emotions and their dangers, which enters into us to-day. Granted that this, as it stands, is exaggeration. Yet within it is truth enough for it to express something of what the world directly owes to Anthony.

SAINT BRUNO OF COLOGNE

Circa 1030–1101

In writing of the first Egyptian hermits, the conceit that they " ground " at the Christian " grammar " proved of service. To a modern ear at least theirs was not yet that song which the world aches to hear, however much their scattered outcry may have been unified and sweetened by heavenlier hearing into that " one clear chord " which strikes " the ear of God." Nor, perhaps, are we quite alert to catch the music of that austere chant which rises from Carthusian cloisters. Their own inhabitants have confessed that it is hard enough to achieve its perfect harmony and rhythm.

" Thou hast been clinging," wrote Guigo, the fifth Carthusian Prior, about 1130, " to one syllable of a great song, and art troubled when that wisest Singer proceeds in His sing-

ing. For the syllable which alone thou wast loving is withdrawn from thee, and others succeed in order. He does not sing to thee alone, nor to thy will, but to His. These syllables which succeed are distasteful to thee, because thou clingest to that one with which thou wast ill in love."

Something of St. Bruno's hymn is to be listened for, not alone by his disciples, but by all whose ears are not too deafened by those noises from which he fled into the forests and the snows; and possibly the harsh outcry of the Egyptian deserts, and the grave music from the Alps, and, afterwards, the splendour of a Spaniard's love-songs, winged in all but perfect poetry for God, may combine to express for us something which our hearts, too, may echo.

I.

"There is something else here, and there always will be something else—something that the atheists will for ever slur over; they will always be talking of something else."
—DOSTOEVSKY.

WHEN the hermit and monastic spirit poured from East into West, receptacles were best fashioned for it by St. Benedict; and the Benedictine monasteries, gradually reinforced by the great cathedral schools, safeguarded and handed on the treasures of Greece and Rome, mingling with them the Christian belief and law, so that a triple culture made its way through what was to become a united *Europe*, and, in fact, created it. But culture has been proved again and again, to be useless if a spirit within it be lacking; and in the chaotic eighth and ninth centuries the monasteries themselves and the Episcopate degenerated, and came so low as to make hope for any future seem chimerical. But the immortal spirit within

the Church leaps always forth into creative action, and reform and initiative witness to its working. It is no part of my intention to relate these, nor to describe that renaissance of monasticism, in particular, which is supremely associated with the names of Cluny, nor, again, with Citeaux and the development of the Cistercian Order in the hands of a St. Stephen Harding or St. Bernard. In any case Cluny and Citeaux were alike, and never pretended to be other than, Benedictine. But the spirit of the hermits, more strictly so called, had never quite died out. Its great renewal in Italy, at any rate, came through St. Romuald of Ravenna, who founded the Camaldolese and other hermit communities.

He was born about 950, of noble blood, but in a terrible period, when even the good had to be of a half-savage virtue. His father had killed a rival, and Romuald entered a monastery for forty days' expiatory penance. His endeavours to reform the monks whom he joined ended in a plot to murder him. After a few years he fled, and joined a Venetian hermit, Marinus, as a disciple. Together they would go for walks, singing psalms by twenties

and thirties under the trees. Romuald could not read, and Marinus used to hit him over the head with a stick when he went wrong. Romuald ended by becoming deaf in his left ear, which Marinus hit, and asked to be struck henceforward on the right. With an Abbot from a monastery near Châlons-sur-Marne, and a Duke who had decided to escape retribution for his crimes by becoming a monk, the two hermits crossed into France, and there for a while lived in true Egyptian style. But hearing that his father had also become a monk, and was regretting it, Romuald was for returning to Italy. The neighbours, who prized their hermit, determined to kill him, so as to have his corpse, at least, for territorial protection. He pretended to be mad, shaved, and ate: they let him go. He walked to Ravenna, seized his father, tied his feet to a beam, and flogged him into a new conversion. The old man died soon afterwards; and Romuald now established himself in a Ferrara swamp, whence he emerged half poisoned, swollen, and perfectly bald, and "as green as a newt." After this he travelled from place to place, trying to found communities of

hermits, and finally established himself on Mount Sytrio in Umbria, where he created a group of solitaries, which all but proved permanent. When he knew he was to die, he had himself carried to a cell he had prepared, and, having turned out the two brothers who had assisted him, let himself die, "alone with the Alone."

I have outlined the history of this Saint, which was written by the even fiercer-souled St. Peter Damian, and is well eclipsed by that of the Mail-clad Dominic, Peter's disciple, in order that the tremendous chasm between two interpretations of an ideal, bridged by St. Bruno, may be the better gauged. His work, however, was less influential than St. Bruno's. St. Bruno was born about 1030 in Cologne, possibly of that noble family of Hartefaust whose descendants profited, till not unrecently, by certain Carthusian privileges granted to them as, so to say, "Founder's Kin." He was quite young when he left for France, already the source of those mingled influences, intellectual and also moral—that is, "knightly"—which were for forming the European "Middle Age." To Paris he never went, though possibly

he listened to Berengar at Tours, and anyhow established himself at Rheims, where the cathedral school, already some two centuries in being, had risen to earlier and more splendid fame than Paris, and was then flourishing under the rule of Heriman. Bruno reached that level of success which the age could understand and praise; he on his side took on its colour so completely that there is little enough in his writings to distinguish them from anybody else's. He returned to Cologne about 1055, and was, I think undoubtedly, ordained priest. He was appointed a Canon at St. Cunibert's, where most probably he had had his early schooling, and in 1056 was summoned back to Rheims to teach what he had learnt where he had learnt it. This gives, I suppose, the surest indication of his intellectual standing, for Rheims was by no means likely to put up with a second-best. He was Heriman's right hand, till that scholar became a monk in 1057. Bruno succeeded him, and for twenty years ruled not only Rheims, but all the educational institutes of the diocese. His success was remarkable, and so were his pupils. It will be seen they did not forget him; and

Rome itself was to summon to its councils the professor whom Urban II. had learnt to value when, as Odo of Castiglione, he had sat under him at Rheims.

In 1075 he was transferred to a totally new sphere of action. He was made Chancellor of the Church of Rheims. The task was doubly distasteful. To uproot oneself from a professor's chair and to enter upon practical and financial businesses must anyhow be difficult enough. Besides, he was under an Archbishop, Manasses I., who was a man of simony, violence, and barbaric pomps, and had openly rejoiced to become Archbishop, "since now he need no longer sing Mass." Hildebrand himself had striven energetically with him. At the Council of Clermont, 1076, Bruno already brought up evidence against him; he reappeared at that of Autun, 1077, and Manasses was suspended. Manasses took a ferocious revenge, and then appealed to Rome. The records here are confessedly confused. At least, it is probable that Bruno did not return to Rheims, while in 1080 Manasses was finally driven out by a combined revolt of laity and clergy. Bruno meanwhile had revisited

Cologne, and in 1080 or 1081 took now once more at Rheims the steps which so reset his life's direction as to make him the Saint we know of.

There was enough, doubtless, in this broken and harassed career of professorate and chancellorship to incline a man to pessimism and despair of the world he lived in. Had he been a cynic, he might have half rejoiced when the clergy of Rheims who were for electing him for their new Bishop found themselves overruled by Henry IV., from whom Helinand of Laon bought the archbishopric for a heavy sum. Or again, an ambitious man, seeing a prize thus snatched from him, might have retired in disgust and petulance from the world's huge cheat. But Bruno was to have plenty of chances later on, in Urban's Court, to win a glittering and influential place. In reality, well before the climax of this quarrel, he had used the scandal of Manasses as an occasion for beginning to realize that ideal of solitude and contemplation he had long ago conceived. Already in 1077 he and his friends Raoul le Vert and Fulco the One-Eyed, Canons of Rheims, had vowed to renounce the world.

Here, too, it had been a garden which was the place of their ecstasy, and, rising from the beauty of that green loveliness amid the huddled houses, like Augustine and his mother once at Ostia, they beheld the immortal glories which lie behind earth's shadow-play. Not until this year, however, 1080, could the dream, never dissipated, be fulfilled.

Perhaps there can be nothing more impressive than the spectacle of that inner, personal life by which a man is living. All men have it. Beneath the plate-armour of bluff, behind which even the most frivolous-seeming hide from their own eyes and the world's, what loneliness, what melancholies, what disgusts! And in the futile and degraded, the hopelessly unsuccessful in morals, in human intercourse, in lovableness, what secret efforts and hopes, what tentative affections! And in the hard and brilliant, what self-distrusts, what giddiness, as abysses yawn suddenly at their feet! Shall we say that in proportion as we get really close to the world's nondescripts, its weaklings, we are approaching a vision of encouragement, even awe? And as we near the soul of the successful, the popular, and the

four-square monarch of a man, we are preparing for ourselves an all but heartbreak of anxious pity ?

But what puts us on our knees is the sight of a *strong* interior life within, and alien to, a strong outside activity; when, in a Bruno, successful as professor, and hard fighter in the world of men, affairs, and money, is revealed a soul aloof from all these things, wanting, all the while, something quite different—in tone, not with the crabbed dialectic of the classroom, nor with the fretful noises of courts and councils, but with the mountains, the firwoods, and the frozen stars of winter. This, not, as I said, through weakness, but through a width and depth of vision and a force of will, unable, quite, to submit to all these tyrannies. Is humility here ? Is patience ? That, for now, I do not ask. There is at least *transcendence :* there is something great, perhaps repellent. A gay book has been written with for hero a Don Juan of our days, and its title calls him, with evident relief, " One of Ourselves," and delights to fancy that all men, after all, are pretty bad, and companions need never be hard to find, and we may all join kindred

hands, be we but honest, in light loves and laughter. But it isn't so. Some men are *great*, and don't ask for that companionship; to none of that belongs, it well may be, the inner life of any man. It is that but few, like Bruno, not only do not shut their eyes to it, but liberate it, nurture it, and develop it to heroism.

Bruno did not easily find what he wanted. Like all these great initiators, he began by going deliberately to school, and put himself under St. Robert at Molesme, and for a while was a monk there. But even Robert was to find it necessary to separate from that centre of diluted inspiration later on, and to found the Cistercians. Bruno went first, not unaccompanied, and remained for a while in the forests of Sèche-Fontaine. He remained in affectionate union with St. Robert; but, as ever, his paramount personality acted as magnet, and disciples not wholly to his liking began to gather round him, some from Molesme itself. Meanwhile the saintly Bishop of Grenoble, Hugh of Châteauneuf, had seen in a dream a church built to God's glory in the Alps, and seven stars that lit the way to it;

so, when Bruno with his six companions appeared before him, the Bishop found his dream to be a symbol, and welcomed him with awe, and offered them a dwelling at Chartreuse, an Alpine eyrie some four miles from Grenoble. There, among all but eternal snows, Bruno was by him established in 1084. In this terrible solitude Bruno achieved, for a while, his aim. He never meant to found an Order: he composed no rule. He had left city for town, town for forest, and forest for more inaccessible mountain, in search of solitude where he might "make his soul," serve God, copy the Cross, and obtain that clear vision which the "multitude of business," he had found, obscures. It is strange to see how slowly great Founders achieve their work, and after what modifications of ideal. Francis of Sales wanted to do a work almost like Vincent de Paul's, yet his Visitation nuns are cloistered; Ignatius of Loyola but gradually, perhaps never, foresaw what his Jesuits were to be; Bruno assuredly had no notion of creating an Order which should be halfway between that of Camaldoli and the Benedictine, and should restore, almost accurately, the ideals of St.

Pachomius, and create a kind of new standard in Europe.

On this Alpine platform, more than three thousand feet above sea-level, the hermits built tiny cells, where at first they lived two by two. But that life of silence and solitude lends itself to no description of any startling interest. When you have said that the early Carthusians had no Rule, and but gradually formed "customs," not formulated until Guigo, the fifth Prior; that they increased their isolation from each other by forming separate cells; that they met, not often, for singing Office, but prayed in solitude; that they ate but very little, went thinly clad in that most bitter cold, and studied much—the first Carthusians were all of them scholars, and their library became famous—you have said all that is substantial in their life.*

This life Bruno and his friends pursued with much content and general goodwill for some six years. Then that call of obedience, to which all these idealists had schooled themselves

* Mr. Algar Thorold, in the *Dublin Review* for April, 1892, gives a picturesque and adequate account of the modern Carthusian's life.

to listen, broke in upon their silence. Urban II., who, as Odo of Castiglione, had been a disciple of Bruno's at Rheims, regarded himself as heir of Gregory VII. in all that related to reform. That this man of sagacity and determination resolved almost immediately after his elevation to the Papacy (1088) to summon Bruno to his assistance speaks more for Bruno's personality, as revealed even during his professorial years, than even the call to the Chancellorship. Urban's enemies were powerful enough; there was an anti-Pope, Guibert of Ravenna, and he had the Emperor for him. To this fiercer than any previous conflict Bruno went in 1090, followed at once by most, if not all, of his Community, panic-stricken at the idea of life without his visible example. The empty Chartreuse was entrusted to the Abbot of Chaise Dieu, though Bruno's friend Landwin was made Prior of such monks as for a while stayed there. It was still protected by the affectionate care of St. Hugh of Grenoble, who had become almost one of the Carthusians himself, so did he love their dwelling.

Even were there satisfactory records about the share which Bruno took in the Pope's

reforms, it would be undesirable to relate them here; for this is a sketch, not of the politics of his age, but of the hidden and contemplative ideal his life enshrines. Synods and councils crowded one upon another; disturbance, agitation, flights, would have driven a lesser man, in love with loneliness, to despair. Evicted from Rome, the Pope took Bruno with him to Calabria; at once the clergy of Reggio vote for him to succeed their dead Archbishop Arnulph. Urban and Duke Roger of Apulia favour the plan. Bruno escapes it by causing Rangier, another of his Rheims pupils, and now a Benedictine near Salerno, to be elected. The Saint implores the Pope to suffer him to return to solitude. The Pope grants half his prayer. He may re-establish his hermit life, but accessibly, near the Papal Court, ready for summons. Urban offered him the Church of St. Cyriacus, in the Diocletian Baths at Rome, for refuge; Rome would not do: Roger, Great Count of Sicily and Calabria, and uncle of the Duke of Apulia, was for giving him his castle: castles would not serve. At last a place was found on the Duke's estate, La Torre, in Calabria, a spot different in every way, save loneliness,

from the Chartreuse of the Dauphiné. In its radiant fields, round which the mountains put a crown of beauty, Bruno and his monks built themselves rough huts of wood, and in 1091 was inaugurated the Italian Carthusia. The rôle played by Hugh of Grenoble was repeated by Count Roger, and to both alike the title of "Founder" of the destined Order might well be given. Bruno was grateful to his benefactor, and visited him often; it was he who baptized, in 1097, his son Roger, afterwards King of Sicily. Count Roger himself, like Hugh, loved to spend leisure days with the monks, and built himself a lodge near their enclosure.

Undoubtedly Pope Urban, without realizing it, had been responsible for much by bringing Bruno to Italy. To start with, he had prevented the quite possible dying-out of the Carthusians in their cold Alps. Bruno never meant, as I said, to found an Order, nor expected to have survivors there. On the soil of Italy, however, not only did the little band of hermits survive, but it grew and had to divide into new groups. After La Torre, Our Lady's hermitage, came the foundation of San

Stefano, about a mile distant. In founding it, Bruno was perhaps directly influenced by the example of the Camaldolese hermits; for he meant it as a home for the weaker monks, the air of La Torre, though mild compared to that of the Alps, being still too sharp for some Italian constitutions. Herein, again, Urban had worked for wider than he knew. It was not nothing for Bruno to find in Italy a double current of eremitical ideal, that of St. Romuald and his Camaldolese in the North, and the thinner yet sufficiently strong impetus given by the Greek hermit, St. Nilus, in the South. In fact, another cloister, that of San Giacomo, given in 1099 by Count Roger to St. Bruno, had actually been inhabited by Greek monks. Roger gave it to Bruno in thank-offering. He was, in 1098, besieging Capua, and a plot had actually been made to betray him into his enemies' hands, when a dream about St. Bruno warned him of his danger. He escaped, and, falling ill soon afterwards, was visited by Bruno, and made him this gift, as well as the lives of the traitors, for whom the Saint had interceded. It may be said, frankly, that the friendship of the two

men is singularly beautiful, and Roger's letters worthy of his character. He died on July 21, 1101. Urban had died in 1099, and Bruno's world was emptying of his life's associates. One joy, however, had been his. In the early autumn of 1100, Landwin, Prior of the reconstituted Chartreuse, visited him, and told him of the good estate of that house. Bruno sent back by him an admirable letter of encouragement and affection, which we would be glad to quote, if only to show his serenity of ideal, his firmness of thought, and his warmth of heart. Landwin was captured on his way home by Wybert, the anti-Pope, who imprisoned him, and so he died, praying for his enemy, who had himself died, however, one week earlier. The letter was carried back by Landwin's companions to Grenoble.

Bruno himself was by now sick to death. The story of that death is the simplest. He gathered his brothers round him, thanked them, begged their pardon for his faults, and made a profession of faith, emphasizing in particular the Catholic doctrines of the Trinity and of the Real Eucharistic Presence, in regard, doubtless, of the heresies of Roscellin

and Berengar which had vexed his period and his thoughts, and he affirmed the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. "I believe," he concluded, "in the Resurrection of the Body, and in Eternal Life"; he received the Viaticum, and so died, October 6, 1101.

Whole districts flocked to the poor cloister where Bruno had dwelt lonely, and throughout Europe *rolligers* carried, and collected, the praise of him who had lived so silent.

II.

THE CARTHUSIAN IDEAL

C'est pourquoi me voici, très-pauvre, devant Vous,
Balbutiant encore et cependant jaloux,
O Verbe ! d'être un peu l'humble écho de Vous-même,

Et je sens dans mon cœur monter comme la mer,
Plus tendre et plus puissant que les mots de la chair,
Un silence divin qui prie et qui Vous aime.

C. GROLLEAU.

THE Carthusian life, itself something of a hymn, half grand, half naive, like those old compositions of St. Ambrose, recalls to mind two poems upon itself, by Matthew Arnold and Robert Louis Stevenson. Each poet seeks to rise superior to what he sees, even while it frankly awes him; yet each, when we probe to his innermost mood, is frankly melancholic, and this because each is in real truth pagan.

Of course, the melancholy is not merely within, but very much on the surface of the—after all—most respectable Matthew Arnold. In each (though very briefly, yet poignantly

in Stevenson) is a keen appreciation of the natural beauties of the Grande Chartreuse and its environment: Arnold, despite himself, is still *romantic.* In Arnold, more culpably than it would have been in Stevenson, who always owned up most frankly when he didn't understand what he saw, but did see straight, are careless lapses of observation. He imagines he can watch the monks "*passing the Host from hand to hand.*" And he certainly didn't examine their library. He considers his faith, in opposition to theirs, "purged by vigorous teachers, who had seized his youth"; he had been taught to gaze on the high "white star of Truth," as not Carthusians are; he contemplates them as some Greek might a runic stone, thinking the while of his own gods: "for both were faiths, and both are gone." He is

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest my head,
> Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
> Their faith, my tears, the world derides—
> I come to shed them at their side.

To keep himself in countenance, he has to regard the Carthusians too as ghosts, unmanned men, half realities flitting between

sheer nothingness and full-blooded life; they are, like himself, survivals—he, "last of the race of them who grieve"; they, last "of the people who believe."

He has to set them beside himself, looking regretfully out at the life of action—he, spoilt for it by his corroding agnosticism, which yet is unable to find satisfaction in any hard and gay materialism; they, because they can't help themselves either; they have *grown into* the shadows: their "bent was taken long ago"; Action and Pleasure call them "too late"; they beg not to be disturbed, but to be left in reverie, shade, and desert peace.

Well, we must allow that Matthew Arnold had to be melancholy, but really we can't have him suggesting Carthusians are. It is perfectly true that ex-soldiers, ex-judges, ex-courtiers, ex-roués, are to be found in plenty within those cloisters; it is true, too, that they would say, looking back upon their old lives, that all *that* was, in a sense, "the vanity" which the ancient writer called it; but they wouldn't allow that they had, by old experience or new self-oblation, *lost* anything. The gaiety of novitiates is proverbial, and the

stricter the gayer; but that is emphatically *not* due to irresponsibility alone or even chiefly; a weight has indeed been removed, but that leaves a man freer and stronger to march, and gives him reasonable hopes of attaining. Really it is time that the old myth of cloisters filled with disillusioned men and jilted girls were given up. Postulants don't go there out of pique, or to hide, or to pine, or to *look backwards* generally; but in the certainty of finding the positive, the substantial, and the stimulating. Nor are they packed with cheated boys, "cooked vocations," anæmic and ignorant lads destined afterwards to look wistfully across grilles at banners and bugles, pomps and pleasures, too little appreciated to cause more than the mildest stirring of their atrophied instincts. Carthusians do not, I dare say, laugh much, but I know they can smile, and very humorously; and I fear they would be outright tempted to chaff the plaintive poet who came to beg permission to mingle his tears with theirs; the poet, lamenting that he had been *forced* to abandon much, and had got nothing in return; deploring even the high sacrifice and sorrows of others—a Byron's, a

Shelley's, a Senancour's, since no one was a bit the better for their effort and their pains. *Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis.* Sacrifice and sorrow are indeed, the Carthusians' motto would confess, a world-abiding law; but they are quite sure that they possess a *life*, so expansive and transcendant and unitive that there is no room for repining. The Cross stretches arms wide to embrace the universe; the agnostic frets and dwindles within the circle of himself. Stevenson, temperamentally very different from Matthew Arnold, yet sees the monks from somewhat the same angle. Frankly they are skulkers. He, with all the spirit of life pulsating in his brain, passes too "out of the sun," out of reach of lute and fife, rumour of world at large, and homelier realm of "confidences low and dear." There, at "Our Lady of the Snows," he finds the "unfraternal brothers," "aloof, unhelpful and unkind, the prisoners of the iron mind"—

> Poor passionate men, still clothed afresh
> With agonizing folds of flesh;
> Whom the clear eyes solicit still
> To some bold output of the will.

Fancy and Memory conspire to call them, and him, "to heroic death," or to "uncertain

fresh delight." To the "uproar and the press," to "human business," to laughter, honour, fight and failure and new fight, he summons them from their "prudent turret and redoubt." God, spying from Heaven's top "the noble wars" of mankind, shall like enough "pass their corner by"—

> For still the Lord is Lord of might,
> In deeds, in deeds, He takes delight.

The plough, spear, ship, city; the streets, the fields; the climber, the songster; the unfrowning "Caryatides" who by their "daily virtues," weak enough, no doubt, yet "underprop" high Heaven; trade, marriage, motherhood; the sowers of gladness—these He will approve.

> But ye! O ye who linger still
> Here in your fortress on the hill
> With placid face, with tranquil breath,
> The unsought volunteers of death,
> Our cheerful General on high
> With careless looks may pass you by.

I may be allowed to acknowledge my immense admiration for Stevenson. By experience I know how all of him stimulates, from his astonishing style to his inner breadth of mind; from his sheer story-telling power to his

subtle penetration of motive and registration of emotion; his breeziness, his reverence, his tenderness, and his remorseless irony; his humanness and his triumph over weakness of body and of instinct; for whose pages are at once clearer-sighted and cleaner than are his? Not Dickens's, often maudlin; not Scott's, clumsy often; not, surely, Thackeray's. Yet the author of *Jekyll and Hyde*, of the *New Arabian Nights* and of *The Dynamiter*, knew most certainly what *fear* meant, and what corruption, and was not ignorantly victor. How was it, then, that he missed, all through, that *spiritual* element which would have given a fourth dimension to the world he loved so? Which would have shattered his horizons, and put *meaning* alike into fight and future? Was his adoration of strength, of *doing* things, of sheer conflict almost for its own sake, at any rate without seeing its "why," due in part to the superb vitality and appetite of his soul, housed in a body incapable of responding? The weak in body are constantly on their knees before any great strength; and when the body is relatively quelled by valiant soul, that psychic discipline, the relentless cult of

that "chill virtue," cheerfulness, again and again will but intensify the mirage, redouble the illusion, and add enormous power to the attraction of sheer material force. A singular consequence, but undoubtedly to be recognized, not rarely. The pagan may *conquer* weakness, but he can't *manage* it. Only Christ knew what to do with the maimed and the halt; only Catholic priests, the war has proved anew, can cope with the sinner and the dying. Not but what this grimly smiling fighter had his moments of sick horror. He never expected *quite* to succeed at all; had he succeeded at all? Memory brought back, to the consumptive in Samoa, that "bonnie boat," speeding, like a bird on wing, over the sea to Skye; *he* sailed it once: was it really he? εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε. "All that was good, all that was fair, all that was me, is gone." And the present could be deadly, too. So much tenacity, despite the stark truth, to the "half of a broken hope," has scarcely ever been seen as that which he reveals in his "*Lord, if this were enough.*" He sees human nature stripped and filthy; and has to be mauled even to the earth, and rise again to fight "for the shade of a

word," trusting that *somehow* the right must be right. The world isn't by any manner of means a good fight, all of it! At the root of his mind, Stevenson is sad. Are we harsh in calling this great man a pagan? Not if we do not think contemptuously of pagans! Not if we honour and admire the "perfect pagan" as the flower of God's *natural creation*. But what is *lost* if we believe in super-nature too? We reverence Stevenson's immense self-discipline. Why should not he do homage to those who were his brothers in *ascesis*, fellow-athletes, happier than he, not because they experienced less of temptation, but because they had a vision of the reason of temptation, of the goal of effort, and a humble consciousness of help? Why, the very student has to cut himself off one sort of life in order to become an expert in mind-things: he makes a bad practical politician; and the professional athlete is rarely an artist. Perhaps departmentalism is a pity, but *some* specialists there needs must be; and medicine is careful not to confuse its rôle with surgery's; and we pay astonished homage to science when it is modest enough to keep off ground that is philosophy's. Were, then, the

Carthusians no more on the spiritual plane than Stevenson on the psychic, we dare not quarrel with them, unless we indeed proclaim the dogma that there *is* no spiritual plane and no one must try to be an expert there: then indeed the Charterhouse must raise its cry for liberty. No; even setting aside the profoundest aspect of their life, the essential value of prayer, the supreme rights of contemplation, and the expiatory value of Christ-uniting penance, I would say that for sheer discipline of thought, for width and height of view, and for true serenity—after all, Stevenson's *was* a torturing cheerfulness—the Carthusians move far loftier than the man who not alone *respects* the "daily virtues," but, to justify his worship of them, declares there are no others.

But, briefly, on this critic's chosen terrain, I would say that St. Bruno's monks proved downright more *useful* to our history than ever they could have been as professors, lawyers, barons, and Bishops. I believe that the truths they stood for, and that order of value among truths which their heroic life emphasized as nothing else could do, saved Europe better than did the careful and discreet librarian, the

honest, tentative physician, the prudent churchman, and the domesticated knight, assuming that there were any. Suppose they had all been Bishops like Hugh of Grenoble, and Popes like Urban II.? But *they* drew their spiritual energy, they felt, in preponderant measure, precisely from the example and the prayers of Bruno. St. Louis, later, felt the stronger to do justice because he was a tertiary of St. Francis; the wisest, now, of our most active workers rely wholeheartedly on the prayers of children and of nuns. Nor let it be said that nowadays, at least, Carthusians are out of place. Principle and order have fled from our unlucky land. We turned them out three centuries ago. Of squandered emotion we have plenty, though the years of the "decadents" have passed. Of tumultuous thinking we have a sufficiency, and of restless energy how very much! Even among Catholics the passion for *external energy*, to which they had so long been disaccustomed, is widely noticcable, and admirable, too, provided the multitude of the business does not eclipse the vision, but is chastened and made orderly and put into perspective thereby.

"How glad I am"—if I may venture to quote what was said by one to whom I had named the three Saints of whom I have here written—"that you are saying something about people *who never did anything.*" Well . . . there are deeds and deeds. At least this much is true; *not* in just any deeds God "takes delight," but in motived deeds—in the deeds that an *intention* may be; in much that the sick writer scorned as mere inertia; and most certainly He will overlook half of that to which the exile peered wistfully back, and could not see to be but wasted output.

A *strength* goes forth, and has gone forth for nearly a thousand years, from those Alpine cells, which denies roundly the whole premises of our well-loved writer's poem.

The Carthusians are not, then, what these two poets imagine them to be. Is there not, however, a real affinity of mood between them and the later Stoics of the Roman Empire, with whom at any rate their literary self-expression seems to mark close sympathy? Stoicism loved to see the world as a complete expression of that ultimate force which was justly to be called God; it was His uttered

word, and all lesser forms were its syllables, or even its lonely letters. That tremendous Word spoke the full harmonious praise of that God whom it made visible, and he who would praise God properly must be in harmony with it, and not with its dislocated parts. Hence, not only obedience to its laws, but love of them, was a wise man's privilege: love, too, not of the whole only, but of each tiny and tinier point of it—of slaves, of the rich, of the *mean* folk round about him. All were, or might be, citizens in God's great city. Self-subordination; renouncement of all pride, all fighting for one's own hand; serenity in pleasure and in pain; flight from distraction and temptation when you could not conquer it; discipline of the will, until it coincide wholly with the current of Divine Necessity which guides us; Will governed by thought, each in submission to the Universal Law, that is what issued into the best—and, at times, most joyful—in a Seneca, a Marcus Aurelius, or an Epictetus. Such, then, was the ideal.

Guigo, the fifth Prior of the Carthusians, left behind him, not his " Customs " only, but some *Meditations*. From these I take a few

sentences, none of which you would be surprised to capture upon Stoic lips.

He begins by riveting your mind to the thought of *sheer Truth.* "Without form or comeliness, and fastened to a cross, Truth is to be worshipped."

(Truth must be told, not to hurt or please, but for its own sake.)

You would not tell a man the truth unless you thought it unpalatable? Perversity! But you do worse when, to please a man, you speak a truth which delights as much as lies and flattery would. Through this stripped Truth lies Peace. *Peace* found in temporal things is as fragile as they are: seek angels' peace, not brutes'. So, if you ask for peace, seek truth; and the beginning of that search is war on falsity. For this nothing is more serviceable than self-blame and self-contempt. "Whoever does this for thee is thy helper." "When anything good is said of thee, it is but a rumour as concerning which thou knowest better."

Yet this self-discipline is but the emancipation from self-torture. It is entanglement in perishable things which is the cause of all our tears and fears. "Easy is the way to God,

since it goes by laying down burdens. Thou dost unburden thyself in proportion as thou dost deny thyself." In this is no false hatred of creation. "All matters which are called adverse are so only to those who love the creature *rather than* the Creator." Yet so rigorously universal must ordered love be that "whoever wishes another to show special love toward him (i.e., *at the expense of* his neighbour or of God) is a robber, and an offender against all. . . . So far as in thee lies, thou hast destroyed all men, for thou hast put thyself between them and God, so that, gazing on thee and ignoring God, they might admire and praise thee alone." "*In hope* thou mayest cherish the unripened grain; thus, love those who are not yet good. Be such toward all as the Truth has shown itself to be toward thee. Just as it hath sustained and loved thee for thy betterment, so do thou sustain and love men in order to better them. Who loves all will be saved without doubt; but who is loved by men will not because of that be saved."

"The poverty of thine inner vision of God, blind as thou art, for He is ever there, makes thee willing to go out of doors from thine own

hearth, refusing to linger within thyself, as being in the dark. So thou hast nothing to do but go gaping after the external forms of bodies and the opinions of men. May God be merciful to thee, that the *feet of thy mind may find no resting-place*, so that somehow, O soul, thou mayest, like the dove, return unto the Ark."

Nearly all of this, and its source, were it not for the strong infusion of St. Augustine—and this affects it only here and there—reminds one almost disconcertingly of the " religionized " Stoicism of the Roman Empire. Now, first and foremost this bears witness to the extraordinary vitality of civilizing ideas, as " canalized " by the monasteries and schools. After all, that crowning phase of Stoicism came at the *end* of a civilization. It was scarely astonishing, as a *result* of a philosophy including so much good from the outset, tested by centuries of experience, and " emotionalized " by recurrent imperial persecution. But that after chaotic centuries, after the degradation of so much that made the " body " of the Christian religion, at the *head* of a new era,

unparalleled, perhaps, in creative impetus and spiritual triumph, these ideas should be found as strong, more pure, and so similarly stated, is a perfect revelation of the work of the Christian spirit, and is a tremendous encouragement. In particular, it designates a permanent debt civilization owes to France. She alone, in the early Middle Ages, disseminated *ideas*. What followed was largely the disciplining of Teuton emotions by French thought. We have been taught to think poorly, if at all, of what was going on between those old cathedral schools and in the cloisters. But a life was going on, capable of sudden self-manifestation as lofty and powerful as the best which had preceded it. ("The best"; I speak quite roughly: yet I believe that in a true human sense that Stoicism was at least *as useful* as, say, that far more mystical and dangerous phenomenon, Neo-Platonism; and as for Aristotle, Aquinas was very soon to reinstate by equalling and even transcending him).

Yet, in spite of all similarities, a difference of principle leads to a gulf between the serenity of the Stoic and the Carthusian peace.

Each was enabled to take a universal view: to be well above the tyranny and war of immediate circumstance; each caught a tremendous harmony in what to so many is but silence. But, for the Stoics, this did indeed issue directly into the Stoic pride; the self-sufficient man was their ideal; he was "cosmo-centric," yet essentially "auto-centric"; his very toleration, his gentleness, his sympathy, was more than half contempt. In his journey towards this ideal, his self-knowledge tended inevitably to melancholy. "I see what I *should* be; I see what I fain would be; probably I *can't* be that, any more than my fellow-men can be what they should be. At best I can *submit* to the world-force: willy-nilly I must, in the end, reach the goal to which it sweeps; meanwhile, this world is a sorry place, and I but a poor creature. Best that I should draw my skirts together, lest they be sullied and then soil that relatively wise and noble self I have so painfully emancipated."

In the Carthusian monk is a humility of mind not found in those Emperors, statesmen, and professors. Christ took up human nature, "not despising it"; while *human perfectibility* was

not, the monk well knew, in himself or in his fellows; his "sufficiency was of God"; on Him he concentrated, well certain that should *he* move towards that Centre, his brother, and this ungoverned, undirected society as a whole, must, involved by his strong tendency, move thither likewise. Not isolation, nor yet personal supremacy, was his ideal; but a gathering of himself and his world towards their God.

And we are carried back to what is almost a platitude, yet no more so, perhaps, than all essential truths. The Stoic idea of *God* was not that of the Christian. When those philosophers wrote most beautifully about God's Fatherhood, of God as a Pilot, as Friend, as Lover of His world, they knew quite well that they were but "condescending," using a language not only metaphorical, still less fully "analogical," as we would say, but positively dangerous and apt to mislead. Of the ultimate force in things, that which is in—or is?—the world, which by absolute intrinsic necessity draws it to its end, they knew nothing save that it was inevitable. The human will, chained like a dog beneath a cart, might struggle and strain, but none the less must go

whither the Driver drove. It can only lessen the pain of that journey; and who the Driver was, and what his goal, not the Stoic might tell you. In the Carthusian mind the Christian idea of God was total master: and for full personal revelation, he had Christ; and for method—well, once more, before his eyes he held the Cross, steady above the whirl of life, unshaken by crash of systems or by death.

The Stoic, because he *thought* more than the Cynic, reached a sweeter and more universal freedom; but than either did the Carthusian attain to a more positive, more active, more optimistic, more expansive and established peace. And active peace is, I dare say, some sort of description of true Heaven.

In singling out, thus, certain aspects of the Carthusian ideal, I have not, of course, for any moment imagined I was giving an adequate account of this mode of life, or its history, or of the monastic ideal in general. The Theology of the ascetic life is quite firm-knit, and rooted in the authentic revelation of Christ and in words of His hard to be, save wilfully, misconstrued. I have hoped to disengage three elements, mainly: First, the personal

function and even the strong lovable *personality* of St. Bruno, and its importance as a down-right civilizing factor in European history. Second, the tremendous discipline of thought which he reinstated, which was assisted and led up to by his way of life—for nothing can be more perverse than to regard his, or allied, *ways of life* as primary, and claiming, as an end in themselves, subordination of thought and will. Finally, that all this current within Christianity sets, *not* towards annihilation, but construction; not renunciation, save temporary and of the *less*, but attainment of the more in every lasting way; is not pessimistic, but hopeful; not selfish, but social; not separatist, but knitting into one the soul, the world, and God.

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

JUNE 24, 1542–DECEMBER 14, 1591

THERE are a few Saints whose name carries with it a mysterious atmosphere, an enchanted air, a kind of mirage, a sense almost of unreality, or else at least of magic. Such is not the courtly Francis of Sales; the hard fighter, Thomas à Becket; the theologian-patriarchs, like Athanasius or Chrysostom; nor even a hero of romance, like St. Louis. Even St. Francis of Assisi is too linked with simple nature; St. Bernard and St. Catherine of Siena, for all their ecstasy and penance, with the business of their Europe; the Curé d'Ars, with his pulpit, confessional, and catechism, is still too near our generation; St. Teresa herself has stubborn features which, for all her mystic halo, cannot melt within its glory. But her fellow-worker, John of the Cross, seems almost a pure spirit, best to be

compared to the fierce radiation of his own Castilian rocks; a flame in the sky; a panting, quivering eddy in the air; a piercing hymn, whose notes are lost for their utmost intensity of vibration. Brown-robed, white-mantled, he melts into the Spanish desert and the sunlight, till at times he seems no more than a name of power for the symbolizing of some terrible doctrine of Annihilation, and, again, of the soul's Wedlock with its God.

Yet John, like all those others, was a man; and his poetry the unequalled heritage of a literature; and his destiny our own.

I.

"My companion spoke but rarely, and when he spoke at all it was rather of the desert or of nature or of God than of anything particular to himself. . . . After all, they were his companions, and in the immense loneliness of Castile he had come to know them as a man of two-score and ten should know his friends. 'And so,' he said to me . . . 'and so we must never forget that God has given us the hour after sunset. . . .' Night fell . . . and then suddenly I saw my companion a little way off on his knees, between the immense horizon, praying. . . . I thought it was Spain that I had seen, alone, talking with God in the desert."

EDWARD HUTTON

St. John of the Cross was born in Old Castile on June 24, 1542, of very poor parents. In that land of proud austerity little, however, mattered more than pure descent, and little less than poverty. Therefore it was not mere money-lack which seemed, at the outset, to indicate for John a humbled future, but the mean estate of the beautiful orphan girl his father married. Gonzalo de Yepes, from Toledo, was assuredly of ancient pedigree,

but, being poor, he helped his uncle, who educated him, in his business, and thus was often travelling to Medina del Campo, then a trading centre of importance. On his way he would halt at the desolate village of Ontiveros, lodging with a widow who had for adopted daughter Catherine Alvarez. With Catherine Gonzalo fell in love, and he married her out of hand. For this his family, deeming itself disgraced, renounced him. He learnt silk-weaving from his wife, but remained inefficient, and when the widow, who helped them, died, their poverty became destitution. At his own death, Catherine was left with three small boys and no resources. She journeyed with great difficulty to Torrijos, and implored help from a brother-in-law, an archdeacon and a member of the chapter of Toledo. But the priest made his excuses, passed by, and turned the obscure woman and her sons adrift. Another brother-in-law, a doctor at Galves, received her better, took over the care and education of her eldest-born, Francis, and was for making him his heir. She left him there, but his aunt ill-treated him, and after a year she fetched him

back, unbroken, even as she was, in spirit, but perhaps somewhat cowed and made half helpless for practical life. Her second son, Luis, had died in childhood. Grimly she toiled at her weaving till the boys should be old enough to help her; but Francis married very young, and could do no more than provide his mother and Juan with a roof. He was unsuccessful in his trade, and afterwards did odd jobs, like gardening, for his brother. He died in 1607, aged seventy-seven, and his personal piety had grown so great that it was recognized, by popular instinct, as sanctity, and the Canons of the Collegiate Church of Medina and members of four religious Orders came to the mean hovel, and Canons and Carmelites carried him, as they would have done for no grandee, to his poor grave. Possibly the glory of his younger brother, dead sixteen years before, enhaloed him, and Francis may have been honoured partly for Juan's sake; yet was his sanctity substantial, and if indeed it is John, not Francis, who has been set above our altars, we are but left wondering the more to what heights of holiness God's spirit was to carry John.

Ordinary men, who seek in Saints' lives for what may help them, are easily discouraged to find that these holy personages seem to have been canonizable from cradle up. Often they refuse to believe this, or at least lose all interest in them, not without some grounds, I dare say, of good reason. Yet, after all, what kind of cause is there to doubt that the children of a woman like Catherine Alvarez, in a country like sixteenth-century Castile, may have developed without relapse that life which, at their baptism, was given them? The Spanish air they breathed was icy, or was furnace-hot, but was always clean. No malaria of doubt, suspicion, or self-delusion tainted it; wills were not weak. There was sin about then, but not indifference; instinct was not perverted; they had Catholic souls, strong with an almost terrible health for response to, or rejection of, God's grace. It is certain that John began, as he continued, spontaneously attentive to his prayers, quiet and collected, austere yet ardent, in tone with the sunburnt rock-land all around him. At the poor school which he attended till he was thirteen, he showed intelligence; but he could be taught no trade, and at

last a gentleman who had charge of the hospital at Medina invented a post which the awkward boy might fill, and not be merely one more burden on his mother. Simultaneously, he could go to the Jesuits' school at Medina, opened in 1551. There he remained for a few years, revealing himself something of a metaphysician and a psychologist in the scholastic sense. His unsophisticated brain dealt vigorously with the current theory of the soul and its faculties, and he obediently practised the various "methods of prayer" which instantly put these to their most practical and lofty use. You will here find all the skeleton, so to say, and the soul of his mystical writings; they imply the ordinary scholastic training, and postulate a continuous and tremendous experience; they show no trace of any study, or adaptation, of historical schools of mysticism. He "invents nothing," but utilizes a simple intellectual scheme, and is "given" an overwhelming and enduring revelation. His human experience he enriched by patient service done to the sick, in whom, after the most realist manner possible, he contemplated Christ. He resolutely rejected the repeated

suggestion that he should become a priest, though the fancy came to him, as to an Aloysius Gonzaga,—and in John's case it was no mere ardent dream—that he should reform some decadent religious Order. This at least remained with him, that he would become a religious. The sacerdotal call came to him, therefore, involved in the wider vocation to serve God as monk or friar, under religious rule. A chance visit to the Carmelite convent of Medina focussed his gaze upon that Order. He found his mind abruptly settled for him. He received the habit on February 24, 1563, and took the additional name of St. Matthias, whose feast it was.

It is a modern practice, difficult, but fascinating and well justified, minutely to study a boyhood and adolescence in the hope of better understanding the developed man. Yet it is John's manhood that best helps us to fix values upon his youthful tendencies. His destined power of spiritual intuition, and his passionate and almost terrifying preoccupation with all that was profoundest in the Christian soul and most universal in its spiritual possibilities, prove that the interest in psychology which

we hear that he displayed was a genuine, first response to instinct. The theological-scientific learning of his day was rigid, not to say harsh, in its elements and their organization. To him this did no harm. As I said, into his reliable Spanish brain our Northern vaguenesses, and our modern ambiguities, ill-veiled contradictions, and confusions chosen almost by preference, were in any case not likely to sink and settle; nor, with his ever deepening spiritual experience, was he fated to grow, like too many professors of any system, oversatisfied with the *map*, merely, of spiritual life, too ready to treat the plan as the "thing itself," as exhaustive, to disregard new living details, the concrete instance, and that actual mystery, Life, which circulates in every individual, and has no outlines, weight, or measures. As a matter of fact, John was to declare roundly that no two souls are quite alike; he would not deal in types; he was to be *wise*, not "clever." Can we go further, and say that he was all the while a poet and an artist? Save that he did indeed reveal himself as these, we have no evidence, in his youth, for such surmise. Mere inability to learn a trade does not

prove that a man is victim of high visions. And, indeed, inspiration may lay hold of a man quite late in life, and elicit, abruptly, without earlier hint, the secrets of his soul. But in any case the secrets were there, fermenting, so to say, and wearing the crust thin: one outside shock is usually not so violent as, by itself, to break through plate-armour of materialist use and wont; the imagination needs some previous disturbances, even though half subconscious; and, anyhow, no such overwhelming shock is discernible in John's history. Therefore we may safely say that in John's aloofness from practical push and obvious efficiency is a true suggestion of interior imaginative life, active and constructive. Yet were his dreams no mere day-dreaming. The Spaniard was never a sentimentalist. His fancy might run riot; passion was always there, and might flame suddenly high; but the morbid exhalations of emotionalism were not more likely to be his than the futile volatilizations of the intellect.

In John's "remoter preparation" of his developed manhood, then, we are to see an intelligence sane and well balanced, educated

by firm methods, and within very definite limits, and an imagination which solicited him to recognize that those horizons were no absolute, final cloister to reality; the capacity for passion was to humanize that intellect and enrich that imagination to a degree unparalleled, perhaps, even by St. Augustine and, assuredly, by Aquinas; and over all this manifold, in tendency tumultuous, yet in fact obedient nature, brooded the Spirit, reaching from end to end, and ordering all things in sweetness and in strength.

II.

The convent which John entered belonged, of course, to the Mitigated Carmelite rule. It is unnecessary here to describe the restoration by St. Teresa of the ancient way of life. The earlier austerity of the Order had been progressively modified by a series of Papal sanctions, until the "mitigated" rule, to which St. Teresa was for thirty years obedient, was, presumably, universal. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this "mitigated" rule implied no laxness or disorder, or infidelity on the part of those who, quite legitimately,

chose it, and conscientiously obeyed it. St. Teresa, in founding houses where the original rule should be accurately followed, was supplying the needs of a different sort of person, and was passing no censure upon those who should not follow her. The foundation, however, of "reformed" houses for nuns created a need for the restoration of the old rule among the friars too, in order that sympathy in ideal and experience of their special kind of austerity and the practice of contemplation might not be lacking in those whom she would call upon to "direct" the Sisters. Teresa obtained leave to found houses for such friars, but the difficulty of collecting recruits remained. Fra Antonio de Heredia, Prior of the Medina Carmelites, offered himself; she did not consider him wholly satisfactory, but accepted him provisionally.

Meanwhile, in the same convent, John of St. Matthias was endeavouring, on his own account, to live out the unmitigated rule. He did this, especially after his profession in 1564, and even during a period spent at the University of Salamanca, without allowing his method of life to clash in any way with the special

kind of rules and regulations which surrounded him. After a while, ordination was more or less forced on him, and in 1567 he decided that this observance of a rule within a rule, almost, indeed, *despite* a rule, kept him spiritually on the rack, and he proposed to transfer himself to the lonelier life of the Carthusians. He spoke of this to Fra Pedro de Orozco, who informed St. Teresa. She asked John to call on her; instantly she discerned his worth, and laughed to find that, with him, she had collected "a friar and a half," for the portly Prior, Fra Antonio, made the small St. John look even tinier. Still, it was he, not Antonio, who was to fulfil her incredible ideal. At this time he was twenty-five, she fifty-three. Months passed. The men were found, but she had no house. At last, in June, 1568, a friend offered her a cottage at Duruelo, near Avila. It was unspeakably filthy, and consisted of a porch, a kitchen, one living-room, and a garret. "No one," declared Sister Antonia of the Holy Ghost, who visited it with her—"no one, however spiritual, could possibly live in it." But she and John saw further, and remembered Bethlehem. "Our Lord," she said of John,

" seems to hold him by the hand." She, assuredly, held the inexperienced little Saint by the other; and, though she " was angry with him now and then," mothered him effectively, made him a habit, and sent him off, with one workman, in the autumn of 1568. He exulted in his hovel; his hopes ran riot; the porch should be the church; the garret, the choir; the parlour, dormitory; and they would eat in the kitchen. But the first day, at least, there was nothing to cook, and John and his plasterer broke the day's long fast with scraps of bread begged from the villagers.

On November 28, 1568, John, now " John of the Cross," Antonio of Jesus, and Joseph of Christ, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, took at Duruelo their vows as friars of the Primitive rule.

They lived there for a while in great poverty and penance, and the magnetism of the Spirit who dwelt with them drew the crowds. The friars moved to Manzera; another convent was opened; novices multiplied; a house of studies was created. John was torn from his solitude; he moved from place to place, forming the raw recruits, and checking the twofold tendency—

to exaggerated and unsanctioned penances, and to an external apostolate—which, in different ways, was from the very outset remodifying the reform. But besides sheer business and these internal distractions, honest outside persecution was soon to harass him. For John had become important: he reformed monasteries; he exorcised the possessed; miracles flowered beside his footsteps. The friars of the Mitigation felt the counter-shock of his independent progress. They honestly considered his enterprise to be a defiance, and himself a rebel; they perceived him to be compromising the sober and godly repute of the Carmelite régime, and leading the peoples into all the dangers of fanaticism, that fatal defect of the splendid Spanish quality of intensity. Under an undoubtedly good motive, how many ill instincts nearly always lurk, half deliberately unattended to. Beneath this admirable disguise of careful zeal, what jealousies, envies, rancours, personal pique, and other vices of good men, were smouldering! The attack was engineered entirely by means of the opposition of one authority to another. The General of the Order, the Papal

Nuncio, the subordinate departmental authorities, were found, some favouring the reform, others against it. It seemed to be shown, alternately, that John and Teresa were within their rights in acting as they did; and that they were rebels, founding houses in spite of prohibitions, creating a schism within the Carmelite ranks, and ruining an existing institution for the sake of a Utopian ideal. Six or seven of the new-founded houses were closed down. The year 1577 marked a crisis. The Papal Nuncio, who had hitherto championed the reform, died, and his successor was hostile to it. The war became more open, and, despite the indignation of the populace of Avila, St. John of the Cross was arrested and carried off by men in whom no longer misguided zeal, nor even jealously, held sway, but sheer unbridled anger. He had many opportunities of escaping; indeed, on one occasion, he profited by a chance-opened door, coolly marched out of his prison, went to his cottage, locked it, burnt some important papers, and then allowed himself to be recaptured. For a while he totally disappeared. St. Teresa was in despair. What would be done to him ?

Where was he? "I would rather," she wrote to Philip II., "he were in the hands of the Moors."

As a matter of fact, John and his companion were taken to Toledo, where the friars promised him great honours if he would return to the Mitigation. He exposed the credentials of the Reform, and said he would be loyal to it. They scourged him sharply, condemned him to bread and water, and imprisoned him in a cell less than six feet by ten. It was, in fact, a sort of cupboard opening into a larger room, and lit only through an opening, high up, less than three inches wide, and giving upon a corridor. By standing on a chair beneath it, when the sun shone on the corridor, John could see to read his Office. The door was padlocked and sentinelled, and so, after the escape of another friar, was the door of the main room. Here John, only too glad to be made a hermit of, spent his solitary days; in the evening he was led to the refectory, and took his meal of bread and water and fish, or salt fish without any water, from the floor. After it he was sermonized and violently flogged. At last the flogging, which, after all, was no worse than

his own penances, was omitted; but the imprisonment lasted for over eight months, and not once was his heavy, blood-stained woollen tunic changed. Mentally, too, he was tortured. Friars of the Mitigation sat outside his cell, relating the collapse of the Reform, and that Teresa herself, with his other friends, had abandoned search for him. In the furnace heat of summer the Saint's body wasted away to a skeleton, and for many weeks no spiritual refreshment, even, reached his soul.

At last, however, into this desert place Christ entered, and turned it into Paradise. The goaler-friar, going to make sure of John for the night, found the cell one glory. He rushed for the Prior, who hurried forward with two religious. He burst in, but, in his poor lantern's light, the splendour flickered and out. He cried to John, asking where that light had come from. John showed him there was neither candle there nor lamp. The Prior left, but the radiance returned, and lasted the night through, abbreviating it to a moment's space, and in the light Christ spoke to John and promised him deliverance. Later, on the Eve of the Assumption, the Prior with two

others entered suddenly; John was too weak to rise, for he was kneeling, and the Prior rebuked him for his disrespect. John's gentle answer disarmed him for a moment, and the Prior asked him what his thoughts were. "That I would like to say Mass to-morrow, the Assumption." "Not in my time," said the Prior, and turned his back. The feast passed in desolation, but on its morrow Mary came, and renewed her Son's assurance. And again Christ came and promised; and again Mary, who showed John in a vision a window, whence the Tagus could be seen. Thence he was to climb. But the convent was unknown to John; where the window was he could not guess, and anyhow the door stayed locked. He waited patiently on God's word.

At last the gaoler was changed; the new custodian's heart was kindlier; he allowed John, when the friars were at dinner or siesta, to walk in the big room, and even in the corridor. And lo, in the corridor, the window, recognized at once. Thence should his going be. To the gaoler John showed a farewell gentleness, and offered him a Crucifix which

he still wore. The gaoler went to fetch some water, and John wrenched the staple of the padlock loose; and, the same night, the gaoler forgot to take away the lantern. But at once a new test to faith. Travellers came to the convent, and two friars were told to sleep in the room outside John's cell. True, they left the room door open, for the heat was appalling, but they drew their beds close to where his own door was, and their conversation, that night, seemed fated never to finish. At last they went to sleep. John had, meanwhile, been tearing his cloak into strips, and had made a rope. He took this and the lamp, and shook at the loosened padlock. It fell off. The friars awoke, and asked who was there. John made no answer, and soon they slept again. Stepping almost over them, he tiptoed to the corridor and reached the window. He tied his rope to the lamp, and inserted its rod as a hook between the wooden sill and the stone. The rotten woodwork should have broken, but held firm; the lamp-rod should have bent, but stayed rigid; the rope was much too short, and when John let go and fell upon a pile of stones heaped against the wall he should have

killed himself, but he was not bruised.* He fell into a courtyard; it was two in the morning; he had no idea of his whereabouts. At last he saw a dog, gnawing some bones near to the heap where he had fallen. He went up and scared him, meaning to follow where he fled. The dog scrambled up the stones, leapt the wall, and vanished. The Saint was too weak to climb. He prayed. Somehow—by what spiritual or psychic agency who knows ?—he found himself on the top of the wall, and then down beyond it. And now, assuredly, even the angels smiled, for he had been deposited in the courtyard of some Franciscan nuns, surrounded by four walls; the one he had come down from; two, which were city walls, with the Tagus running deep below them; and a fourth, not to be scaled, but looking towards the city. The predicament was appalling. Lights flashed and flamed in his eyes. Voices told him to follow them. He staggered forward, still praying, and saw himself seated on the coping, and fell thence into an unknown

* Had he chosen the next window, he would have fallen on the farther side of the city wall, and crashed down the cliff face into the Tagus, furiously swirling through its chasm below it.

street of unknown Toledo. He sheltered in a porch; and when day broke at five asked a market woman the way to the nunnery of the discalced Carmelites. He reached it, tattered, dishevelled, like any madman. The scared Sister admitted him at last, as Rhoda did St. Peter. The humorous ingenuity of Providence still befriended him; in the infirmary lay a Sister, dying, it was thought. No sooner had food been given to the fainting man than he was hurried up there to help her. At that moment the door thundered beneath the blows of the pursuing friars, led by right surmise to that convent. They ransacked the house; but respected Death's angel, who guarded the sick-room's doors. There John lay hid for a while, till, in a closed carriage, he was spirited away to Almodavar.

After his deliverance from "that whale," as John emphatically described his prison, he resumed a life monotonous to read about, but filled, assuredly, with incident for himself. Struggles between rival authorities and, worse, rival ideals seemed endless, though the Reformed and Mitigated friars were separated by Papal decree in 1580.

Himself he continued in a practice of poverty irritating to his confrères, whose trust in God was less, and in his habit of escaping, whenever he could, into some cave or lonely garden for his prayers. Ecstasy with him became in some sort habitual; none can forget the incident when he and Teresa, on either side of the convent grille, were speaking of the Holy Trinity, and fell alike into trance, and remained raised from the ground, in adoration. He moved among miracles: storm, fire, flood, obeyed him. Wounds which had mortified, and the linen which bound them, exhaled that fragrance which is no rare phenomenon in Saints' lives. Teresa died in 1582; and he burnt her letters, to which he felt still attached. Lonely enough now, in all conscience, he was continually snubbed and put into the background, till at last he became thoroughly ill and was sent to Ubeda, where the Prior wholly disliked and distrusted him. His very illnesses were disbelieved in, and, like Peter Claver, he was left to look after himself, or, when tendance was clearly necessary, still mishandled.

Through the obscurity of these clouds "death dawned"; on Saturday, December 7,

1591, John was told he had but a few days more before its sunrise. His pain vanished, and his face glowed with that gathering glory. "I exulted," he murmured, "in what was said to me—that I am to go into the House of the Lord." They offered him the Last Sacraments, but he told them to wait. Fra Antonio, then Provincial, was sent for, that he who had been with John at the beginning should not fail him at what was, after all, no end. But it was almost too late before the old Prior could come. Early in the next week John asked how long it was till Saturday. Our Lady had promised an especial help to her friars on that day. Nor, indeed, was she to play him false. On the Thursday he asked his infirmarian to burn the letters from his friends which he kept in a parcel under his pillows, lest their intimacy with him, the suspect, should compromise them. He then, in the evening, received Viaticum, and sent to beg the Prior, for the love of God, to come to him. He came; John asked his pardon for the trouble he had given him, for the expense he had caused, for the bad example given. Face to face with the reality of death and sanctity, the Prior felt the

illusions of the eyes to melt; he wept, begged John's forgiveness, and the night became starlit and serene. On the Friday he asked once more what day of the week it was, and thereafter the hour only, but often. "I have," he said at last, "to sing Matins in Heaven." During the latter part of Friday he entered into a Gethsemane of the soul, and though Fra Antonio arrived, and was fain to alleviate his agony, John remained in a deep distress, augmented by the mistaken consolations of those friends who urged him to remember how much he had done for God and the Reform. At that hour all he had ever done seemed to him shame only, sin, and failure, and he lifted his whole heart higher still towards the Crucifix. At five he asked for the Last Sacraments, and made all the responses clearly; and at nine, when he asked the time, deplored that he had still three hours to wait. "My exile is prolonged," he repeated. At ten a neighbouring convent rang for Matins; he repeated he was to sing them next in Heaven, and thanked Mary that she suffered him to pass thither on her own day. He grew faint; the friar was for summoning the community. Still John re-

fused. There was yet time. At eleven he sat up in bed. "Blessed be God," he cried. "How well I feel!" He exulted, and asked those present, for the room had filled, to sing God's praises with him. He began the *Miserere*, and the others answered, as a choir. They continued with other psalms, and John kept kissing his Crucifix. At 11.30 he caused the friars to be summoned. They all came, and, on their knees, extorted from his humility a final benediction. They began to recite the Recommendation of the Soul; after a minute he told them to continue without him, for he had to rest. He clasped the Crucifix closer, and reposed in prayer. A little before twelve he handed the Crucifix to a secular, arranged his habit and bed, and took the Crucifix back. The secular kissed his hand, and John reproved him gently. Close on midnight, he sent Francis, whose office it was, to ring for Matins. He went, and the Saint's bed became orbed with glory. In its heart John lay for a few moments in an ecstasy, and then, returning, asked why the bell was ringing. "For Matins," they said. He smiled, having reached the midnight, and replied, "I am

going to sing them in Paradise." He kissed the Crucifix once more, and, with closed eyes, said, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," and, like a child, without shock or effort, died.

He was forty-nine years old.

II.

I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart,
And I smothered my desire

I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped,
And to this road before me
I turned my face.

P. H. Pearce: *Renunciation.*

I.

In writing anything at all about St. John's mystical works, I am all the while anxious to recall or convey certain postulates. First, I do not in any sort of way propose to analyze adequately, or theologically, his peculiar doctrine, but to fasten on three or four only of its organic elements, though these I believe to be essential, and to contain, indeed, or to issue into, the rest. Next, that it was St. John's aim to write *only* for those whom God called to a particular and transcendent union with Him-

self, probably within the special frontiers of the Carmelite Order. Others might indeed draw profit, when and where they could, from his writings, but his work was not intended for them directly. Again, that he wrote his comments on his poetry by request, reluctantly and, he felt, inefficiently. Next, that I am very far from hoping to *explain* him, still further from criticizing him; at most I would hope to clear away certain difficulties, or causes of misapprehension, which surround him. Again, that he not only does not attempt fully to explain himself, and bases his doctrine wholly on that of the Church, which is that God infuses a supernatural life into *all* baptized Christians, and that its proper outcome, in *all*, is a supernatural contemplation of and union with God, after a purification which takes place, normally, when the soul is already separated from the body; but he teaches, again with the general belief of Catholics to support him, that even in this life, in exceptional cases, and intermittently, a substantial union and contemplation of this sort is granted by God to chosen souls, who experience, therefore, perhaps, all their Purgatory, and some

foretaste of their Heaven, upon this earth. Finally, that St. John was rigidly orthodox and intended no sort of Monism, Pantheism, Quietism, or other philosophic or theological heresy, and must be interpreted, in obscure passages, by the Church's ordinary doctrine.

The soul which would ascend towards God must pass, St. John teaches, through a night which consists, first and foremost, in the "mortification" of desire, the putting to death, that is, in a certain and definite way, not only of such apprehensions as reach the will through the senses, but of the desire for them. The "self" is to be left, in regard to outward things, "in darkness," without "occupation." It returns to that "blank" which, scholastic philosophy teaches, it was when first infused into the body, before the senses had time to supply it with material for reaction. St. John piles up the disasters which distress the soul when it is obedient to "desires." They exhaust, torment, darken, pollute, and enfeeble it*; and this not only if the desires be for what is

* *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul* can be read in close sequence, and they express, on the whole, a negative and positive element in the same doctrine.

connected in any way with sin, nor only if they be habitual. All stirring of desire, even innocent, even automatic, he would wish to have "mortified," and his primary method is the contemplation and imitation of the Suffering Dying Christ, and the consequent direct contradiction of the senses. This issues into those maxims which have earned for him the nickname, Professor of Nothingness. You must seek *not* for the easy, the pleasant, consoling, reposeful, great or precious, but, first, for their opposite, then for *nothing*.

"Strive not to desire anything, but, rather, nothing. That thou mayest have pleasure, or know, or possess, or *be*, seek pleasure in, knowledge of, and to be, *Nothing*. That thou mayest attain to that in which thou hast no pleasure, or to that which thou knowest not, and possessest not, and art not, thou must walk there where thou hast no pleasure, go through that which thou knowest not, and possessest not, and art not.

"When thou dwellest upon anything, thou hast ceased to cast thyself upon the All.

"Because, in order to arrive from all to the All, thou hast to deny thyself wholly in all.

"And when thou comest to attain the All, thou must keep it without desiring anything.

"Because, if thou wilt keep anything with the All, thou hast not thy treasure simply in God."

Delivered thus from the prisoning senses, the soul steals forth from the house

of its captivity, now put to sleep and silent.

> In a dark night,
> With anxious love inflamed
> (O happy lot !),
> Forth unobserved went I,
> My house being now asleep.*

For many, John's doctrine is herein vitiated at the roots. His promise of life starts from suicide. Nothing can grow from a fundamental negative. For what, after all, is a man who neither likes nor dislikes anything ? Perhaps none such exist. Yet some, indeed, approach to that deplorable condition. A few are temperamentally so stupid that they cannot see that this is preferable to that, even as, departmentally, some men may lack an ear for music, be colour-blind, derive no exhilaration, no solemnizing awe, from the secrets of the evening or the caress of morning air. They " see nothing " in a masterpiece; " have no use for "ambitions or ideas; they drive to distraction those who seek to please them by a total lack of response—not unselfishness. Sometimes, too, an apathy is induced by over-

* These translations are taken, with very rare verbal alterations, from *The Life of St. John of the Cross*, by David Lewis.

strain, a hopeless uncoiling of all life's mainspring. Prolonged self-worship may similarly overshoot itself, and a man may truly reach the pitiful state to which the young, forgivably, pretend, of being blasé. He has chewed his world, to extract from it the latest drop of sweetness, till it is left insipid; he may have lost even his morbid craving for the rotten. Short of this, and composed, again, of the young, or of those who regret and envy youth, is the tedious herd of cynics, who "have no more illusions," who find all things, however high their promise, "much of a muchness" in result. This attitude may become permanent, vulgar, and irritating; usually its victims are curable, by the tender action of years, or, again, by the burly box on the ears which even middle age receives, at times, from events. In the meantime, these are the dullest of all folks to meet; for how can a man who is thoroughly uninterested be interesting? There are, finally, those who get into this highly artificial state by a misapplication of some doctrine of "Indifference"* which they believe themselves to have got, perhaps, from St.

* A regrettable word, but it is hard to find a substitute.

Ignatius. By a kind of mathematical comparison of created things with the Uncreated, the finite with the Infinite, they reduce all of the former to an equality in littleness, and, because lesser things are not that Highest, they treat them with contempt. Such a view implies, I confess, a complete forgetfulness of the Presence and Activity of God: it is alien to the Creator's, who exulted in the world He saw to be so good; to Our Lord's, whose kindness was not calculated; for whom men and women were not just *symbols*, arbitrary and equivalent; in whom no human instinct, no homely or heroic love, was lacking; no sense dulled; no vital fire extinguished; from St. John's himself, not least among the Saints, whose poems thrill with a right *sensuous* response to the exquisite challenge of created loveliness.

In any desire is a double element: my delight in the thing itself, and my expected joy of possessing it. There is implied also the belief, or hope, that it will be found satisfying; and in exact proportion as I find or make it so, I strike an equivalence between myself and it, and raise or lower myself to its value. There

are, therefore, these three propositions: I *want* it; *I* want it; it and I make *one*. Now, if we take it as admitted that a man is meant to "live," and that Christ definitely said He came "that men might have life, and have it more abundantly," it follows that a desire goes not only against the proper completing of my human nature, but against the Christian ideal, if its object contains a germ of any death—such is all which is tainted with sin, and this does not concern us here—but also if I desire it, absolutely, for my lonely self, or, absolutely, for its own merit. For, on the natural plane, that is to argue that *it* exists *for me;* that I am "cosmocentric"; or, that *I* exist *for it*, and am ordered to, and therefore limited by, it. This cripples my humanity, which should be wider in scope and ideal than my Self, and certainly should not be reduced to the bulk and value of that limited thing which any soul, by nature, can transcend. Supernaturally, such a desire either makes me my own God, or makes its object mine, and I have fallen into idolatry. For, supernaturally, the soul is capable, in a true sense, of God, and so, whether I make my Self my idol, or subject myself in worship

to the object of my desire, either way I reject God. The whole of St. John's doctrine of Desire is directed to pursuing, in its very roots, its invisible ultimate fibres, this double Idolatry: the self-exaltation which seeks this or that, absolutely, for *my* sake, and the self-degradation which sets me beneath this or that, absolutely, for *its* sake.

That selfishness vitiates desire is certain even in experience. Love rises in purity precisely as it becomes unselfish. The moment I " grab " a thing, I soil and bruise it. The moment I say; " She is for me," I sacrifice her, a victim to the Idol in my heart. Even in the most spiritual transactions this holds good, even the conversion, which I may desire, of a sinner to God.

Thus alone is ensured a perfect spiritual chastity. Part at least of the law of bodily chastity is that I have no absolute property in my fellow-man, nor he in me. I have no final and unlimited right, indeed, over *any* property, least of all over the body—the soul-indwelt body—of another. There is, too, a spiritual seduction and a spiritual adultery, committed by the horrible sacrilege of bringing to pass,

for selfish reasons, even the handing over to me of another's mind; worse still, by the capitulation to *me* of his self, his soul.

By far the best—indeed, the only—way, then, of being morally sure that my desire is untainted, is to dissociate explicitly my innermost will from my desire, and to hold what is deepest in it aloof from me. I, with my Desire beside me, must be presented direct to God: I am not " to " it, nor it " to " me, but both " to " God. Hereby petition passes into affirmation. " Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." " Lord, lo me! Lord, lo him!" Often enough, perchance, when the desire is extreme yet utterly pure, we shall find ourselves, two souls, standing side by side before the Ultimate, incapable of uttering more than the lonely Name of God, and, at most, the exclamation of the Mass, *Offerimus Tibi calicem salutaris.* We offer Him a Mingled Cup, containing myself, my desire, and the manifold mystery of life; and we can but trust His consecration to turn the whole into the life-giving Blood.

This hurling of ourselves direct upon the Ultimate may produce, at times, and even

after a soul has grown "experienced" in this, downright laughable effects. We may neglect to attend to what is being said; we may forget to answer; we might fail, even, to recognize a passer-by with whom we have been, earlier, in communion so intimate that we had disregarded all concerning him save his transmitted thought. Instinctive this may be; yet, at other times, deliberate: a calculated coldness, almost, a chosen aloofness, may prove necessary to safeguard ourselves from the uprushes of the inquisitive, the sentimental, the selfish will. Yet never fear! Thereby is nothing lost, or even endangered. The inward passion makes itself well felt across the barrier, and penetrates, by a true telepathy, to the subconscious and most real of that other soul. Thus, certainly, though wordlessly, are the most deep, loyal, rapid, even, and most numerous, of friendships made. Such is to-day's experience; such was the secret of St. John's enormous influence; such the magnetism of the Name of Christ, which alone to-day wins utter personal love, and the test, food, and sweetness of it, which is joy in sacrifice and communion.

But there is another renunciation which John requires. This is so subtle as to elude anything like an adequate explanation. Yet it is founded on the simple truth that the Infinite and Eternal God bears no proportion to what we imagine, think, or taste of Him. No *image* of God—not even that sweetness which represents Him to the will—is, after the soul has climbed a certain way, any more of value, but must be discarded. Here is the second "night," a midnight compared to gloaming; an emptying no more of the "senses" only, even in their most spiritual value, but of the memory, intellect and will. To the activity of the soul in this midnight John gives (legitimately, since he warns us) the name of faith. Doubtless the senses, even the imagination, even the intellect and will, continue (normally) to operate, but they are unattended to. They may be inhibited by ecstasies, which he rather contemptuously mentions along with "dislocations of the bones"; and are assuredly left behind by the soul when it has achieved a direct union. But, meanwhile, they must be either unattended to or rejected. "Vision,"

even if *supernaturally* induced, must be acknowledged, and put behind one; not as false, but as inadequate to that *kind* of contemplation I am called to: exterior or interior, *all* these apprehensions must be said "No" to. So for the memory: even in prayer I must not seek to remember this or that person or "intention," but go direct to God, in whom the object of my petition, if it is to be granted, will be found. I go, not to my friend, and take him up to God; but to God, and there, if He wills it, find my friend. Even what is good, in memory, must be rejected, because of the tendency to rest upon it; just as a similar tendency is felt, to *rest* upon the vision —imaginative or intellectual—which, at the moment, fills me with divine delight. In this way even the will has to be "mortified," and reduced (John says it seems) to silence. Whatever grace, whatever help or spiritual success or communication God gives to me, is but new material for renunciation, until assuredly, since sense, memory, intelligence, and will, are one after the other transcended by the soul as it climbs its Carmel in the night, we well may ask, What, after all, is *left?*

If I say, "God and the soul in substantial communion," does that seem no answer? Yet what answer would you have, if the essence of the communion is that its reality transcends ideas, and ideas already transcend words? At best we can say what it is *not;* and, again, we can but hymn it, not define it. What wonder, then, if St. John breaks into songs, and what wonder if he chafes at analyzing all his stanzas? In a true sense, the poet must not know what he means, and always he resents "explaining" himself. John tries to comment on and annotate his stanzas, but he often fails to *finish* doing so in the case of his "Dark Night" lyrics; and at best not alone his comment, as far as it gets, seems often enough jejune, academic, fanciful, and unequal, but the poems themselves, finishing because inspiration flags, end in a manner almost commonplace, as with a reference to that overworked "property" of the mystical poetaster, "lilies," or with a chilly reference to some old Testament "Aminadab," whom John introduces, awkwardly, to symbolize the Devil.

Scarcely need we say that this Doctor of

Annihilation never means that the soul, nor any of its faculties, issue into some sort of *positive nothingness* and are stultified. In the Ascent, c. xiv., he insists that the senses, imagination, intellect, and will, cease to do what they have done because they attain to a totality of peaceful energy in which all that ever was survives, cumulative, simultaneous, and conscious, though not, as it were, fractionally attended to. The intellect does not acquire new ideas, discursively, by additions, by argument, but it has knowledge; it "seems to be doing nothing," yet never was so active. Similarly, the memory (*ibid.* iii. 1), and again the will (c. xv.), have served as the separate stairs of a ladder leading to the mystical Garden which is other than they. Yet all that ever they led to, and implied, is *there*.*

* He still insists that the faculties are not annihilated, nor are idle, in that most "unitive" of his poems, *The Living Flame of Love*. A series of the unorthodox—Abelard, the intellectualist; the Beguardins and Beguines of the fourteenth century; Ekkard, a little later; Molinos, condemned at Rome in 1687; and to some ill-estimable extent a Fénelon, censured in 1699—in different ways taught a knowledge or a love which *denied* activity or choice in thought and will. It is they, not John, who may be connected, however loosely, with the philosophized version of Buddhism which Theosophy exploits. In it

In humble search, therefore, of the Divine Lover, the Soul, "disguised," unlike her natural self, not resting upon sense, nor knowledge, nor delight in anything that she does or is, steals step by step of the ladder known to so few, into the Garden where He awaits her.

In darkness and in safety,
By the secret ladder, disguised,
O, happy lot!
In darkness and concealment,
My house being now at rest.

In that happy night
In secret, seen of none,
Seeing nought myself,
Without other light or guide
Save that which in my heart was burning.

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the ultimate personality of the soul is lost; its purified essence is absorbed into, and identified with, the sum-total of reality, itself at its purest and most peaceful when it has regathered itself into the Unconscious All. "I," in this doctrine, was never more than the *interior* (so to put it, truthfully, I think) of some eddy, which, after a while, is smoothed out and vanishes in the general current, though no drop of water, no impetus of force, be lost. It may be said that John, in common, of course, with all Catholic theologians, yet remarkably, because of his strong personal bent towards unification of Soul with God, and evacuation, so to call it, of the material coefficient of spiritual activity, is radically opposed to every fundamental dogma of this modern Gnosticism, Theosophy, which

That light guided me
More surely than the noonday sun
To the place where He was waiting for me;
Whom I knew well,
And where none appeared.

O guiding night;
O night more lovely than the dawn;
O night that hast united
The Lover with His beloved,
And changed her into her Love.

II.

In *The Dark Night of the Soul* St. John describes, on the whole, the purification inflicted by God upon the soul by means of pain, rather

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sometimes quotes and even claims him. In its doctrines of God, creation, and the universe; of the nature, origin, and destiny of the soul; of free-will, sin, redemption, and repentance; of dogma and sacrament, Catholicism is in exact opposition to this its ape and enemy. In a sense there have only been two root-heresies, involving an excess of "spiritualism" and an excess of "materialism" respectively. No one accuses John of the latter: he was equally alien to the former.

It is interesting that this most spiritual-minded of men not only (Bk. II., c. xxii.) explicitly dissociates himself from what makes the substantial practice of Spiritualism, but also from all iconoclasm. Images, from those of wood and stone to those of the imagination, have alike their place in the education of the soul. He seems to climb, with Plato, to the very point where ideas themselves are transcended and all actual knowledge seems to vanish; yet the heart of his whole life is that "Word made flesh" who is the "King and Centre of all hearts."

than the soul's self-discipline. But this pain searches out the roots of selfishness in the same departments of complex humanity; always it is the "*I* want . . .," what is built on the "*I* know," "*I* approve," which he reduces to that "blackness" which is in the charred stick before it reaches a white heat. And it must be owned he does this, at first, like any spiritualized Aristotle who should describe the virtues and vices of the supernatural "gentleman," with all the sagacity, if not precisely the humour, of his pagan predecessor. He takes the "capital sins," in that form in which they may survive even in the Contemplative in search of perfection—avarice, which persists in the soul's clinging to its preferred forms of spiritual knowledge, joy or worship; luxury, in which he recognizes so fully the condition of religious hypersensitiveness; again, he sees how fear of temptation is a source of temptation; how high religious emotion breeds downright fractiousness and irascibility; his clear distinction between aridity of soul and lukewarmness; his recognition of the rôle of physical good health; in all this is shown again and again the irresistible common sense

of this ecstatic, in whom sentences like this are frequent: "All this that she says: God spoke to me: I spoke to God: seems nonsense." He was not a man of delusions. He read a penitent's thoughts one day, and said abruptly "I am a sinner, my child: that is true. But I am not ignorant." "Why do you tell me that?" she said. "Because you need it," John replied. A woman met him one day in the streets of Granada, carrying a child, and claiming for him sustenance, on the grounds that it was his. She argued; a crowd collected. "Well," said John, "who is its mother?" She mentioned a great lady. "And how long has she been in Granada?" "She was born here, and has never been within half a league of it." "And how old is the baby?" "About a year." "Ah," said John respectfully. "This is a great miracle. Myself I have not yet been a year in Granada, and never else in my life within a score of leagues of it." The crowd laughed, and John proceeded imperturbable.

Let it be said here, simply, that pain is perhaps the surest and quickest road to reach Truth. A man shuts his eyes that he may

think the clearer; he must, often, drive roughly away the thronging thoughts, dam the cross-currents of ideas, push down the balance which motives, in either scale, hold quivering, if he is to act forcefully according to some instinct he knows to be right. John boldly tells us to face the downright *suffocation* of the self we first must feel before we emerge into full freedom. The caterpillar crawled along, and looked gay enough, even; the chrysalis has to lie colourless and inert; but only so the butterfly emerges. What is there like pain for the test of friendship? What like pain for the fierce shrivelling up of those myriad, myriad moths with which the candle-light of our imagination shuts us in, as by a moving, intangible, yet most bewildering mist, whereon our own image shadows itself forth grotesquely? What like pain for reducing into ash-dust those spider-webs which loved illusions weave round our very hearts? When a man really suffers, at last we may have hopes for him. Not before. That is, if he be strong enough. Here is an element in John irrefutably revealed: his terrible strength. He could endure the frightful insinuations of God's fire into the ultimate

roots of the love of self; districts in the soul barely known of to most men's consciousness were naked to his piercing eye, and were terribly made clean, rinsed, cauterized, carded, what you will, by the welcomed pain. "What would you have from Me?" asked the Cross-bearer of him, as of many another Saint. "To suffer and be despised for Thee," John answered, and the words have become his motto. This man—with human instincts all alert: why, he was fond of music; he could not stand the Andalusians—St. Teresa (Castillian too !) had to ask for his removal from among them; and a precious anecdote reminds us that he *liked asparagus*—was so master of himself in all things that he could actually succeed, not only in renouncing the self-willed element in all that he was and felt, but in *not slaying* the selfless part in it all; so "mortified" was the separate, autocentric "I" in him that he became a *cosmic* man, all-inclusive; exultant in all, safe in all, alone free and masterful. How shall we appreciate this miracle ? How ever capture (save in lightning-swift glimpses) the mystery of this annihilation of everything which meant the uttermost realization of the All ?

At least we can watch, even in these poems of the Dark, the Saint, holding in one hand the supreme substantial vision, and in the other created loveliness, and friends with both, since neither was held by him for his own worship:

On the flowers of my bosom
Kept whole for Him alone,
There He reposed and slept;
And I caressed Him, and the waving
Of the cedars fanned Him.

As His hair floated in the breeze
That blew from the turret;
He struck me on the neck
With His gentle hand,
And all my senses left me.

I continued in oblivion lost—
My head was resting on my Love—
Lost to all things and myself,
And, amid the lilies forgotten,
Threw all my cares away.

Thus rises and, at the end, thus droops the inspiration of the world's all but greatest love-song.

III.

The climax of St. John's vision is found in his *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and its Bridegroom.* Here, more than even in the *Dark Night,* he speaks of what God does for the soul, rather than what it does for God, or, if you

will, of the insistent summoning by the Lover of His Beloved, rather than of her endeavour to attain Him. Yet even here he must start with what she *leaves*, to recover it in Him. The Lover has wounded her, and fled, and hidden Himself—the strange inversion of this Hunt, where it is the Quarry who has dealt the blow to the heart of the pursuer. "I ran after Thee, crying; but Thou wast gone." She sends the shepherds, they "who go through the sheepcotes up the hill"; she sends her soaring desires, her yearning aspirations, after Him, and herself, meantime, will go over mountains and lowlands in her search: "I will gather no flowers; I will fear no wild beasts." She will "pass by the Mighty and the frontiers, and disregard the barriers of her very nature. Yet she goes, not without asking of groves and thickets and meadows, planted by His hand, if He has passed through them. Indeed He has, and, as of old to St. Augustine, Creation answers:

> **A thousand graces diffusing,**
> **He passed through the groves in haste,**
> **And, merely regarding them**
> **As He passed,**
> **Clothed them with His beauty.**

Ah [She wearily replies]—Ah, who can heal me ?
Give me at once Thyself;
Send me no more a messenger
Who cannot tell me what I wish.

All they who serve are telling me
Of Thine unnumbered graces;
And all wound me more and more;
And something leaves me dying,
I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.

After an amazing prayer for His merciful return, she takes sad refuge in the vision which, not the world, nor her thought, but her faith supplies to her.

O crystal well !
O that on thy silvered surface
Thou wouldst mirror forth at once
Those eyes desired
Which are traced dimly upon my heart.

Yet suddenly, "Turn them away, O my Beloved," she prays. "I am on the wing." Not even this inner vision of faith can she bear. Not even that most spiritual of replicas is Himself, and she resolves to die. But He forbids her, adding the strange words:

The wounded Hart
Looms on the hill
In the air of thy flight and is refreshed.

It is Christ, this time, who is wounded, and cannot fly, and draws breath from the very

shrinking of His Bride, and allows His nebulous outline to grow clearer and clearer through the magical atmosphere into which her contemplation carries her. Amazing picture! the dim, gigantic Stag, still half spectral, in the mists and glory of the dawn.

Forthwith, all but having Him, she knows well enough she is *not* to "have naught beside," and she can turn to all that she was leaving, and thank it, love it for its guidance towards Himself—mountains and valleys, "the strange islands," whispers of amorous gales, night, and "the approaches of the dawn," the "silent music," and the Holy Supper of Communion as the journey ends. Even now, the Bridegroom no more than enters her chamber, fortressed with flowers; and by yet one mysterious renunciation more, "pretending to be asleep," she can make sure that she is pure enough for the consummation of their betrothal. The killing north wind ceases; love wakens all its fragrances; they are fenced about by a solitude more fierce as sentinel than any den of lions or any shields of gold; they weave a garland of emeralds and of flowers gathered at dawn, "flowering in Thy

love " and twined with her dazzling hair; they sing to one another, and, better, they keep silence; she bids Him, again and again, hide Himself in her.

And in that night, " serene " at last, the painless flame consumes her.

Such is the love poetry of St. John. And I would at once ask, How best are we to judge it ? First, if I may venture a purely personal opinion, inspiration is at a higher power in his *On a Dark Night* than in the *Spiritual Canticle* —at least, than in those parts which are not dealing with the Pursuit, but with the Marriage of the Soul. And, naturally, no inspiration in the world could cope with that. When John was *there* himself, he could neither think nor speak, nor did that experience offer anything for memory to lay hold of. Like St. Teresa, he might remember having had the transcendent union, yet feel, as it were, unable to believe it, so utterly would it escape all normal modes of " registration " and assessment and recapture. Therefore he fell back upon conscious use of symbols and traditional formulæ, as from Solomon's song. But while

he was still half aware of an actual process of renunciation, shall we say, something short of the Consummation, or even those brief moments when the one was merging into the other, when the Stag loomed upon the hill, then, indeed, was the moment for no mere symbol-talk, nor utterly speechless vision, but for highest and vocal inspiration. Hence I find this chiefly in the poem of the *Dark Night*, which, except (and naturally) the very end, I feel to be perfect.

Can we, perhaps, best of all detect the special quality of a baffling thing by looking at it in relation to something different, which yet it first of all evokes, by association, in the memory? Thus St. Bruno's ideal and life recall the Stoics; the Hermits, the Cynics; John's theory of desire, the Buddhists; and then at once differentiate and define themselves as, standing alone, they might never have done. Let us, then, say that to pass straight from St. John's midnight garden to the second act of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is most natural, and to identify the spirit of the two most easy and most unforgivable. In each, then, are the mid-

night garden, the waving trees, the whispering waters, the intoxicating fragrance of flowers, the deserted castle, the stairway, the extinguished lamp, the thrilling night, the overwhelming flooding down of Love, the forgetfulness of all the world, the two lives living each only in the other.

> O sink' hernieder, Nacht der Liebe,
> Gib Vergessen, dass ich lebe . . .

The sun is hidden in their hearts, and their hearts become the world.

Now, sentiment, romance, and passion, are three different things, though each may survive, to an ever less degree, while the others triumph. Of sentimentality, indeed, there is little enough in any of the music of *Tristan;* none in the greater passages.* Yet this second act is sick indeed with sentiment, of so high an emotional order, I confess, kept so heated by fierce passion, as quickly to become a scalding steam, pitiless, and unperceived, for the most part, as still *moist.* But " moist " is sentiment, and " moistening "; it

* This is why nearly all English conducting of that opera, almost always sentimental, is a failure. The error is forgivable; for Teutonic sentiment is rarely far from the sentimental, and mostly collapses into it.

weakens and liquefies; as the eyes swim, so the soul melts under its onset and the faculties flow loose and resolve is spilt; the stream goes trickling through the creepers and sops through the moss, and all is lost for nothing. But romance, as here I understand it, has something in it of stimulating; its clear yet fragile morning-light, or its keen starlight, pushes the soul to enterprise and sets it towards an Eldorado, a Jerusalem, a Grail, unlike the fainting violet light of evening or the illusory phantoms of a clouded moon. Illusory are the lights of romance and sentiment, indeed; yet romance does bring with it something of self-conquest, implied by enterprise and adventure, ideal and difficulty. There is romance in Tristan, but most in the first act, and most of all where Tristan rejects Isolde; it thrives on active self-renunciation, not when the soul pours itself into acquiescence, however rapturous.

Now, we may say briefly and at once, in St. John's character and poetry is no element of sentimentality, nor even of that kind of emotion which is moist and weakening and which I here understand by " sentiment."

The "atmosphere," therefore, differs wholly. To read his poetry for the sake of its sensuous delight is an outrage upon him, and, in a Catholic who knows what he is about, perhaps not far from sin.

Next, Wagner's chaotic mixture of philosophy with magical symbolism causes the whole of his drama to be governed by the irresistible Philtre and the spell of Fate. Nothing happened to those two which could *help* happening. But could anything be more fatal to true romance than this mechanistic *motive?* It is as bad when the average talker substitutes Temperament for Fate. A man, they say, is victim of his Temperament. Hope and choice go, here, overboard; for, strangely enough, Temperament is rarely called on save to condone aberration or to justify abandonment of effort. Assuredly Temperament exists, and artists and poets have their own most difficult and restive one; yet neither actor, artist, nor poet got anywhere by just letting loose the reins. Between a governed temperament and an ungoverned is the difference between a broad and a lax mind. Broadmindedness! What a word to

cover every kind of complaisance! Tolerance! wide views! how often they are made to mean just indifference and shallow thought! And to give "scope" to temperament, to refuse to coerce or even guide one's genius, is not that mostly just to give free play to all the anarchic enemies within one, to end in an interior reciprocal massacre of all one's faculties, a complicated suicide? Yet who ever had a fiercer temperament than John? A more devouring appreciation of the sensuously beautiful, as of the spiritual and transcendent? Yet, as we saw, has there been anywhere ever a more vehement reduction of all this to order, a complete focussing of energy and direction? More *granite?* Not on the quicksands of life did this Saint walk, but on good adamant of will. Therefore does Tristan pass from an inexplicable night of nothingness, through a tumultuous period when his world was still "without form and void, and darkness upon the face of the Abyss," into yet another night of Ur-Vergessen, worse than chaos, annihilation. At its lightest, his soul was brooded over by the wings of that Unholy Ghost which Passion is, when from it

Freedom is cast out. Fate, therefore, his lonely, helpless, choiceless Self, explains a Tristan; vocation, John. A vocation coming from a Will, and responded to by will; every step in the Ascent, every new depth of Dark, is inspired by the twofold choice of God and Conscience; and the climax is the eternal, substantial wedlock of Heaven and Earth, the Infinite and the created soul.

In mood, therefore, origin, method, and goal, St. John's progress differs radically from Tristan's, a fact hard, perhaps, to appreciate save by some such comparison. The Carmelite goes from strength to strength, choice to choice; development, realization, the substantial, the permanent, the cosmic are his; disaster, despair, and death, the other's. Tristan is a parody, a caricature, of the Reality; and if it be so beautiful, that well may be because the Real itself is so divine that no image, how little soever it resembles it, can yet be wholly hideous.

Is it possible to speak further? Is any love definable? The moment we *analyze union*, we annul it. And the most real is ever the most spiritual, therefore the most simple,

therefore the least definable. A sort of chemistry of love's psychic preparation, and even consequences, may be made, though successfully just in proportion as love fails from its perfection. But its essence remains timeless and imponderable. It may be known by personal experience, and, at second best, be recognized intuitionally (yet, even so, best by experience's aid) in another, and so registered as present. And it may, if you will, be hymned by poet or seer. As for divine love, who shall cope with that? It is true that throughout Nature each several species, at its best, is so extraordinarily close to, though separate from, its immediate successor that the actual transition-line can barely be detected, and we can but say, This is on this side, this on that. And it is true that the natural, at its highest, is so exquisitely prepared for its elevation, with the minimum of shock, into the supernatural that again the moment of conversion escapes us, and while we say, This or that is "natural," and *Here* is the supernatural, yet what that supernatural *is*, and how it transfuses without destroying all the rest, can never be adequately, even approximately, stated, either in thought

or word. It is easy, then, to mark down in St. John his unshaken base of common sense, Spanish, realist, robust; his trained logical faculty, of avail equally for rinsing out the sickly sweet of sentiment and for coercing the hasty, confused affirmations of generalizing intellect; his sensitiveness of emotional imagination; his audacity and enterprise; his white-hot human passion. But the moment when sense, imagination, thought, and will, are all of them caught up, harmonized, and re-souled, is what we never at all shall capture; and what, after all this was done, he *was*, that in no way can we define. It is time no more to discuss, but to adore.

For, after speaking of St. John of the Cross in this particular way, may we hope at least this, that those even of us who are least able to follow him in any similar path to his may yet feel that they have been in contact with something vast, quite piercing through the limits of average life, and, while assuredly not ignorant of earth, at its most true home in Heaven? With a soul grown cosmic in the fullest sense, not commensurate, that is, with lands and seas, suns only, and stars, and opera-

tive as from some skiey centre of a system; but become brother, yes, and father, in a full sense, of the sons of God, and energizing from that divine Heart of Life with which its self is wedded! True experience, nor revelation only, teaches us that indeed there is nothing common or unclean throughout. At times, doubtless, we feel a shock—we mix with the crowds . . . what meaning is there in talking of these people in connection with any Sacrifice or any Union with God? Our own soul at its hours has the awful flash of knowledge which shows it its own ramifying, poisoning selfishness, its colossal self-idolatry, or, again, its atrophy, paralysis, and poverty. Then the compensating shock shall come; in the intricate living web of some schoolboy's soul, among the simple sins and strong honesties of, say, some Colonial soldier's life, we suddenly see that which puts us on our knees; through our own skies we catch the flickering radiance of the veiled Face of God; and amid the chaotic mutterings of our thoughts we hear the whisper of wings, and in our heart the Spirit faintly singing. St. John of the Cross surely was a man who knew to the full all human pain and

loneliness; the futility of desire; the bitterness of success; the cruelty of beauty; the unsatiable hunger for love returned, yet the agony of that return when life becomes too kind, and gives it. The limited ! the transient ! the illusion of that twilight wherein we hold to it, and the dark, dark empty night when we have let it go ! Yet here, too, was a man who did indeed re-find it all, nor lose anything at all of its reality, but, better still, who could—for it is indestructible—lay hold of all that "good" which the Creator puts and sees within it, and appropriate it, and make it better still, and move in no new Heaven only, but a new earth.

Within his soul the Living Flame had become "no longer grievous"; its burn was sweet, its wound delicious: "by slaying Thou hast changed death into life." The very senses live:

> O Lamps of Fire,
> In the splendour of which
> The deep caverns of sense,
> Dim and dark,
> With unwonted brightness
> *Give light and warmth together to their beloved.*

In the soul God "awakens," and in the heart He "lies awake," moving and yet not

moving, and uniting the divinized soul to His totality of Life. Their consciousness is complete now and reciprocal, and in all the vitality of the human self *God breathes.*

Towards this mystery, done violence to by words, the Catholic's soul, in which grace is, moves humbly, by obedience, and infallibly.

POSTSCRIPT

THE impulse towards an ascetic life is so clearly fundamental in human nature that this should save all who believe in humanity at all from denouncing it, and should lead them to study what can best be made of it. Three great rebirths, or new and massive revelations of it, within Christianity have here been partially studied, less in order to theorize about them than to see what Christianity, which has a way of making the best of things, has done with them. On the whole, the ascetical life always has aimed at some escape from the senses, beginning, as a rule, with an attack upon them; the mystical life has implied some sort of transcending of thought itself, and the imperative limits of the intellect. Too often —take India and Syria and Mesopotamia and Egypt for examples—the senses have taken their terrific revenge—and contempt of reasoning has reduced the would-be Contemplative

to fantastic confusions, if not to downright madness.

Christianity at once reveals itself herein, too, as *stimulus* and as *discipline.* It unhesitatingly proclaims that the senses are not everything, and that the intellect is not everything; but it no less unflinchingly forbids its Faithful to give up, to fold their hands, or to make the best of a bad job. It declares that the World, as constructed of sense and reasoning, becomes an enemy the moment it suggests that it is self-sufficient. It must be transcended. Enormous possibilities for the soul lie out beyond those limits. *Surge, amica, mea, et veni.*

But the same Spirit which sanctions, and indeed stimulates, this impetus instantly sets order in it. Those very hermits who embarked on a career of sense-mortification, a social emancipation so violent as to seem at once suicidal and utterly individualist (and, after all, suicide and individualism are essentially connected: self-slaughter can be the supreme manifestation of self-will), issued directly into those monastic rules which set and kept order in Europe. That is because

their development of *will* was itself orderly, governed, and by way of discipline. Those monks whose aloofness from the "business" of life seemed once more anti-social, and whose "contemplation" appeared as a desertion from due participation in the daily human struggle, were in reality saving the great principles, rending off disguises from the vital ideas, which must be in all struggle which shall not be futile. Effort, enthusiasm, passion even, are necessary; but these make constantly ends of means, and throw up fumes on which delusive spectres are gigantically miraged. The monks set an order in spiritual values, and made clear the governing notions of life, and did not, for that, destroy the functions nor retard the triumphs of sheer intellect, for it may be safely said that without them neither the Franciscans nor Dominicans would have existed—those two Orders which, at a given moment, absorbed, transmitted, and developed all of knowledge which there was in Europe. It is a far cry from Antony to Aquinas, or even from Bruno to Roger Bacon; yet a vital connection is well to be established.

In our North, especially, we have come to

be men of *emotional activity*, when we are not merely money-getting. The emotions, I daresay, are to be ranked lower than pure will or pure thought, if there are such things. Yet they are very human; and really the unmitigated intellectualist is as lop-sided, if more nobly so, as the sheer sensualist. Nor am I to be taken as ranking the work of St. John of the Cross as below Anthony's or St. Bruno's if I say that he set order in the emotions. Terrific renunciation like the Carmelite, is constantly supposed to be the massacre of all feeling, all sense of beauty and of art, and all imagination. Yet John turns out to be the greatest artist of them all, and dare I say? the greatest Lover. His vital scale is perhaps the widest we have studied, for it extends from well within the feelings, through intellect and will, to the extreme possibilities of the spirit. He "reaches from end to end," ordering the whole universe of man in sweetness and in strength.

Oscar Wilde once said that had he been allowed to become Catholic when he, as a boy, desired to, his life would probably have gone swinging round a quite different axis. He

would have had a discipline. As it was—*helas!*

> To drift with every passion till my soul
> Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
> Is it for this that I have given away
> Mine ancient wisdom and austere control? . .
> Surely there was a time I might have trod
> The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
> Struck one clear chord to reach the ear of God?
> Is that time dead? Lo, with a little rod
> I did but touch the honey of romance—
> And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

I do not base too much on that extreme type; but neither will I listen to those who so easily repeat, "Ah, yes! Catholicism might have been the discipline *he* needed, a fit cradle for that cripple. . ." and leave you to gather *they* need no staff nor stay, or can at any rate be self-sufficient in what relates to discipline. Good Stoics! The world isn't made up of self-sufficient men; human society is co-operative, and men are not the better, any of them, for dispensing with the discipline of mood and thoughts offered by the only Church which by its essential law of life carries on Christ's work and shepherds the unshepherded.

With, then, the realization that Christianity means a tremendous adventure and enter-

prise, a bursting out into a fourth dimensional existence, goes the doctrine that *all the more* must it be a Law, an Order, a stronger check and discipline than any other.

And here the Carthusian recalls us towards silence. There are at least three silences: his who has nothing he might speak of: his whose secret, like St. John's, is too great by far for words; his, in fine, who knows that the great Fact *is*, but fears to betray it by his stammering. You, Deodilect, will let me choose the third.

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